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# An Exploratory Study: Grounded in Racial and Ethnic Dimensions of Social Justice, Attitudes of Teachers in Elementary and Middle Schools Towards Culturally Sensitive Constructivist Teaching for African American Students

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Running head: CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHING AND TEACHERS' ATTITUDES

An Exploratory Study: Grounded in Racial and Ethnic Dimensions of Social Justice, Attitudes of  
Teachers in Elementary and Middle Schools Towards Culturally Sensitive Constructivist  
Teaching for African American Students

by

Joy Gregg

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Presented to  
The Faculty of the  
College of Education, Information, and Technology

May 2018

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June Smith, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Committee Member

Long Island University  
LIU Post Campus



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to God, first and foremost, because He is truly the reason why I exist. He has sustained me through life's most trying times and endowed me with His peace. I have also dedicated this dissertation to my beautiful, loving, and supportive children Isaiah, Iyana, and CJ (Calvin Jr.), for their patience and strength. They are truly my beacon of hope. Additionally, I dedicated this document to my wonderful "big sister" Cecile, who has counseled me through life's most difficult moments. To my dear friend Laverne, words cannot express my appreciation for your unwavering love and support that has comforted me throughout this journey. Last, but not least, my mother has been my cheerleader and backbone. She has always been in my corner through good and uncertain times, and even with a million thank yous, I could never repay her.

I humbly acknowledge and thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Louisa Kramer-Vida, and the entire committee, Dr. Smith and Dr. Hogan, for their mentorship and generosity in assisting me through the dissertation process. I also wish to thank Dr. Dodge for his words of encouragement, as well as his support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	VIII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	X
ABSTRACT.....	XI
CHAPTER I: THE NEED FOR CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHERS TO TEACH	
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS TO CLOSE THE ACHEIVEMENT GAP.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Operational Definitions for the terms “Black” and “African American”.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Critical Race Theory.....	7
Racial Identity Development.....	8
Interdisciplinary Perspectives.....	8
Sociological Perspective.....	8
Psychological Perspective.....	8
Historical Perspective.....	9
Overview of Method.....	9
Significance of Study.....	9
Definition of Key Terms.....	10
Limitations of the Research.....	12
Summary and Philosophical Stance.....	13
Organization of the Study.....	14
CHAPTER II. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT EDUCATION FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS	

AND THE TEACHERS WHO TEACH THEM.....	16
Race in Education.....	16
Matters of Race.....	19
African American Students in Crisis.....	23
Differences in Cultural Practices.....	26
Racial and Cultural Identity Development.....	28
Intellectual Property.....	32
Factors That Contribute to the Achievement Gap.....	33
Attitude Formation.....	41
Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions.....	42
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.....	45
Curriculum and Instruction for African Americans.....	46
Practices and Environments That Foster Success.....	51
Social and Constructivist Theory.....	53
Social Justice.....	53
Constructivism.....	55
Summary.....	57
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	61
Purpose of the Study .....	62
Research Questions.....	62
Research Design.....	62
Development of Survey Instrument.....	63
Validity and Reliability.....	69

Description of Setting and Participants.....	72
Ethical Considerations.....	75
Data Collection and Online Survey.....	76
Disclosure and Control of Potential Researcher's Bias.....	88
Limitations of the Study.....	89
Summary.....	91
CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS.....	92
Descriptive Analyses Results.....	93
Pearson Chi-square Results.....	113
ANOVA Test Results.....	119
Findings for ANOVA Test.....	120
Qualitative Data.....	120
Summary of Chapter IV.....	124
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS.....	126
Introduction.....	126
Discussion of Findings.....	126
Recommendations for Future Research.....	135
Conclusion.....	135
Researcher's Commentary.....	136
REFERENCES.....	137
APPENDICES.....	162
A. Informed Consent Letter.....	162

B. Letter to Principal Requesting Permission to Conduct Research.....	164
C. Letter to Superintendent Requesting Permission to Conduct Research in the District...	166
D. Teacher Survey.....	168



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1:	Survey Items by Themes with Sources.....	64
Table 3.2:	Reliability Statistics.....	72
Table 3.3:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ1.....	80
Table 3.4:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ2.....	82
Table 3.5:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ3.....	84
Table 3.6:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ4.....	86
Table 4.1:	Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall Survey Score.....	92
Table 4.2:	Demographic Data by Gender.....	93
Table 4.3:	Demographic Data by Racial Groups & Ethnicity.....	94
Table 4.4:	Demographic Data by Teaching & Educational Attainment.....	94
Table 4.5:	Demographic Data by Age.....	95
Table 4.6:	Demographic Data by Years Teaching at Current Level & Total Years Teaching.....	96
Table 4.7:	Demographic Data by Years of Experience Working with African American Students.....	96
Table 4.8:	Demographic Data by Training.....	97
Table 4.9:	Demographic Data by Political Ideologies & Social Views.....	97
Table 4.10:	Mean and Standard Deviation of Themes.....	99
Table 4.11:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ1.....	100
Table 4.12:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ2.....	101
Table 4.13:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ3.....	103
Table 4.14:	Descriptive Statistics for RQ4.....	104
Table 4.15:	Individual Statements Addressing RQ1.....	106

Table 4.16:	Individual Statements Addressing RQ2.....	108
Table 4.17:	Individual Statements Addressing RQ3.....	110
Table 4.18:	Individual Statements Addressing RQ4.....	112
Table 4.19:	Chi-Square Test of Group I.....	113
Table 4.20:	Chi-Square Test of Group II.....	114
Table 4.21:	Chi-Square Test of Group III.....	115
Table 4.22:	Chi-Square Test of Group IV.....	117
Table 4.23:	One-way ANOVA Test.....	119
Table 4:24:	Within & Between Groups ANOVA.....	119

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Income Disparities.....	74
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### Abstract

Because of the substantial gap between the performance of African American and European American students, there was a critical need to study and understand issues that may contribute to the amelioration of this achievement gap. Therefore, the aim of this study was to understand the cultural sensitivity of elementary and middle school teachers in the New York City Public Schools. This study attempted to uncover attitudes that teachers hold about teaching and learning for African American students, potentially helping to close the achievement gap. This study utilized an exploratory approach to investigate teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive teaching for African-Americans. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students? 2) Do race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold about African American students? 3) How cognizant are teachers of issues that affect African American students? and 4) Are teachers addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction? The findings from this study revealed whether teachers' attitudes and beliefs were indicative of cultural sensitivity or indicative of cultural destructiveness for Black students.

Keywords: culturally sensitive, teachers' attitudes, achievement gap, culturally relevant curriculum, survey instruments.

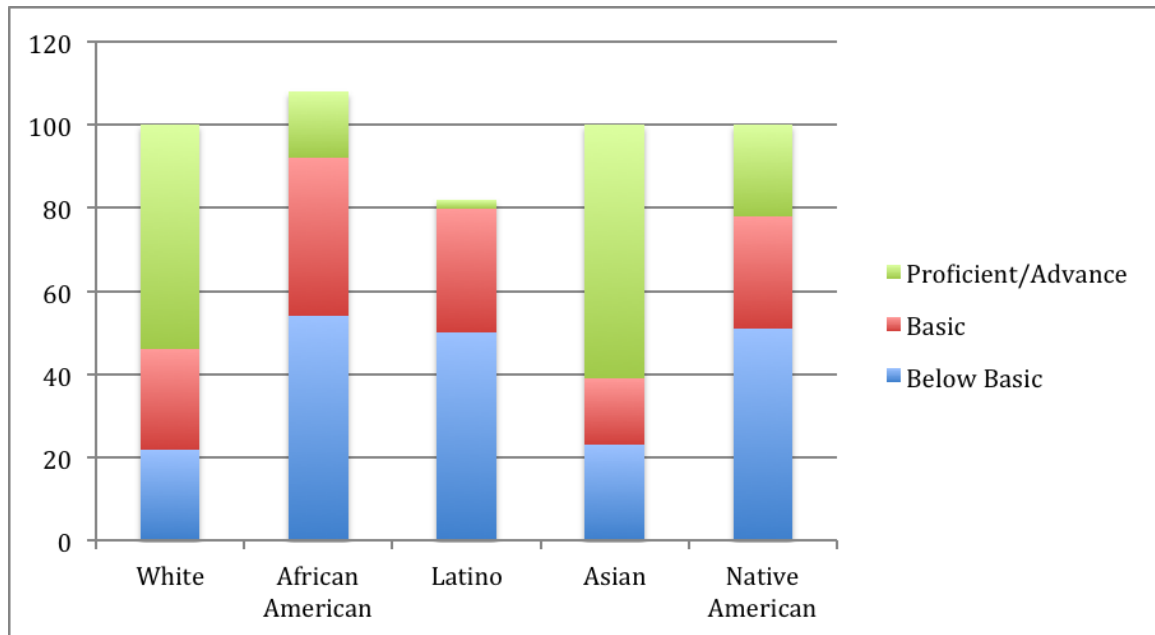
## CHAPTER I

THE NEED FOR CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHERS TO TEACH AFRICAN  
AMERICAN STUDENTS TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Emily Fuller Gibson (2007) argued that

“If a major disease were to sweep across America leaving death and destruction in its wake, we would rise to meet the challenge. Yet we seem to stand idly by as hundreds of thousands of young people fall prey to a disease deadlier than AIDS and more crippling than polio in the decades before the Salk vaccine. We turn a blind eye to this urban destroyer of dreams. We have even invented a euphemism for it to ease our collective conscience, thereby distancing ourselves from accusations of blame, or worse, the betrayal of our children. In our need to escape its virulence, we have named this killer an innocent sounding moniker that is both a misnomer for its cause and a roadblock to its cure” (p.6).

The National Education Association (NEA) defined the term ‘achievement gap’ as the difference between the test scores of ethnic and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers. Recent NEA reports said that the disparity between the academic scores of Black and White students is growing. A decade ago there was a 33-point spread between the reading and math scores of Black and White students at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. By 2000, the gap had grown to 39 points and Black students were, on average, three years behind their White counterparts in math and reading (Gibson, 2007).

*2007 NAEP Grade 4 Reading by Race/Ethnicity*

*Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer,*

*<http://nces.edu.gov/nationalsreportcard>.*

The persistent failure of African American children has plagued society for decades (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). Far too often, the public bombards educators and policy makers alike with the question: why are there so many Black children lagging so far behind their White counterparts? (Donnor & Shockley, 2010; Griffith, Kristsonis, Lecturer, & Alumnus, 2007). Policy makers proclaimed that the achievement gap is no respecter of persons. However it discriminates against the affluent, it saves its most virulent attack for the most vulnerable, poor, and disadvantaged Black and other ethnic children (Gibson, 2007), causing many ethnic children to be in danger of falling into a vicious cycle of failure.

Education failure has been a cause of high juvenile delinquency, low occupational outcomes, low lifetime incomes, high rates of mental illness, low marital satisfaction, a short life span, teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, gang involvement, welfare dependence, and drug and alcohol abuse. All are negative outcomes found amongst many African American

families (Donnor & Shockley, 2010). Policy and practice initiatives have not erased the achievement gap associated with race and class. Therefore, closing the achievement gap has been the focal point of both academic and popular dialogues on education reform, has been argued in congressional offices and in teachers' lounges, and has been discussed on major television broadcasts (Chambers, 2009).

Over a decade ago, President Bush's primary target in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), the largest and most sweeping federal education reform initiative since the 1960s, was closing the achievement gap. Its main goal was to close the gap in test scores between different groups of students while raising achievement for all groups (Center on Education Policy, 2007). In President Obama's 2008 State of the Union Address, Race to the Top was Obama's solution regarding the achievement gap, but even with this reform, Black students, on average, scored 26 points below White students in reading as per the National Assessment on Educational Progress Nation's Report Card in 2015 (NAEP, 2015).

Research has offered many explanations for the ethnic/racial achievement gap. Some viewed the gap as a reflection of society's structural problems, such as, poverty, socioeconomic status, and single parent families. Although these factors affect academic achievement, research findings suggested that socioeconomic status only explained a small part of the gap. Other researchers believed that Black students did not feel accepted at school and experienced high levels of anxiety resulting from racism and stereotypes. Numerous scholars suggested that the achievement gap was directly related to the caliber of the nation's teaching force. Whatever the reason, many agreed that the ethnic/racial achievement gap must be given national attention (Chambers, 2009; Donnor & Shockley, 2010; Gibson, 2007; Griffith, Kristsonis, Lecturer, & Alumnus, 2007; Ikpa, 2004).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers' attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and readiness impact the achievement of African American students. To understand this in an urban area, the researcher conducted an exploratory research project using a survey instrument that investigated teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive, constructivist teaching, grounded in social-justice principles for teaching African Americans. Brown (2006) argued that it is only when one examines teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, then and only then, can we truly understand the relationship between expectation and achievement. Per Brown, teachers' beliefs, expectations, unconscious biases, and assumptions about students' potential have a tangible effect on achievement.

### *Teachers' Attitudes*

Eagly & Chaiken (1993) argued that humans were not born with attitudes. They explained that attitudes formed at later stages of development. Fishein & Ajzen (1975) further explained that there are different theories that demonstrate ways in which one forms attitudes. At the most general level, they believed that people learn to like (or have favorable feelings towards) objects they associate as 'good' things, and they acquire unfavorable feelings towards objects they associate as 'bad' things. Attitudes are complex concepts that one cannot easily measure or observe; therefore, attitude measurement depends on attitudes revealed in overt responses, either verbal or non-verbal (Kronick, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2005). It is for this reason that researchers use survey instruments to measure attitude (Gay, 2000 & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Ladson-Billings (1997) proclaimed that it is imperative to understand teachers' attitudes as they have a direct impact on student performance within the classroom.

### Operational Definition for the terms "Black" and "African American"



The terms “Black” and “Black or African American” will be used interchangeably in this study. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), “Black” or “Black or African American” refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The Black racial category includes people who marked the “Black, African American, or Negro” checkbox. It also includes respondents who reported entries such as African American; Sub-Saharan African entries, such as Kenyan and Nigerian; and Afro-Caribbean entries, such as Haitian and Jamaican (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). However, for this study, the terms “Black” and “African American” will be used to concentrate on all Black racial groups represented in the New York City Public Schools.

### Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were: 1) How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students? 2) Do race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold about African American students? 3) How cognizant are teachers of issues that affect African American students? 4) Are teachers addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction?

### *Addressing the Underachievement of African Americans*

Test biases, poverty, or society's structural problems may not be the causes of the achievement gap between African Americans and European Americans. Perhaps the most comprehensive approach to addressing the achievement gap could be Afrocentric education. The Afrocentric approach in education involves working with Black students to master the academic disciplines from a perspective that grounds them in an African reality. That means educators teach children about events, places, people, and things with crucial reference to and in the critical context of the historical trajectory of people of African descent. However, some mainstream

canon writers have expressed their unhappiness about people of African descent taking such matters into their own hands (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011).

One of the corrective measures proposed for the reconstructive education of African Americans is the implementation of culturally sensitive constructivist teaching grounded in social justice theory and principles. This type of education focuses on students' learning experiences being drawn from the inequities that they experience based on their social group membership. Systems of constraint and disadvantage, such as the social processes of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence, have produced the problems that many African American children face. Culturally sensitive constructivist teaching pays attention to these issues, as well as the resources that individuals, families, social groups, and communities bring to personal and social change and to the transformation of educational institutions and practices. In addition, it also pays careful attention to processes in educational and structural interventions and practices. This attention to process includes balancing the emotional with the cognitive; acknowledging and supporting the personal while analyzing and intervening in social systems; attending to social relations within and among families, schools and communities; and developing competencies in collaboration, interpersonal and intergroup relationships, and education and advocacy (Akoto, 1994; CIBI, 1994; Madhubuti, & Madhubuti, 1994; Nobles, 1990).

### Theoretical Framework

The conceptual frameworks used in this study were critical race theory and racial identity development. These frameworks explained the influence culture and ethnicity have on African American students' learning. Critical race theory (CRT) acknowledges the power, privileges, and inequities inherent in society, and specifically in school settings, that impact the mis-

education of African American children. Racial identity development assists in understanding the self-esteem and identity components of the African American psyche, which African American children bring to the classroom daily (Garrison-Wade and Sampson, 2010).

### Interdisciplinary Perspective

From an interdisciplinary perspective, teaching and learning for African Americans is concerned with sociology, psychology, and history, as these are constructivist in nature. The researcher examined human behavior across disciplines through those lenses.

At the personal level, sociology investigates the social causes and consequences of such things as racial and gender identity, family conflict, deviant behavior, and religious faith. At the societal level, sociology examines and explains matters like crime and law, poverty and wealth, prejudice and discrimination, schools and education, business firms, urban communities, and social movements. This study examined sociology at the societal level. It looked at how events, such as, slavery, racism, and institutionalized discrimination, impacted education for many African Americans ([sociology.unc.edu](http://sociology.unc.edu)).

Psychology looks at how racial and ethnic students find themselves the target of negative stereotypes that place their intellectual abilities under suspicion. The psychological environment of the classroom is one in which their identity is at risk in at least two ways. First, it can be threatening to their self-worth, regardless of their race or ethnicity, because of the constant evaluation of their skills and the specter of possible poor performance and its consequences. Second, the environment can also threaten them by raising the possibility that a valued aspect of their identity, their group, will be devalued. This is something White students do not generally experience in the classroom (Marx, Brown, & Steele, 1999).

Historically, African Americans have been deprived of a high-quality education from the days of Brown vs. Board of Education. The critical race theory mentioned above addresses the roots of racism as a deeply rooted component of American society, especially ingrained in the history of African Americans (Bell, 1988; Delgado, 2002; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, 1987; Williams, 1987). The goal of critical race theory is to help us understand complex systems that created inequities in education that historians and others passed down through the history of education as it pertains to ethnic students.

Unifying the study of these diverse subjects helped the researcher understand how human action and consciousness both shape and are shaped by surrounding cultural and social structures.

#### Overview of Method

Using a small convenience sample of teachers in the New York City Public Schools, the researcher used a survey instrument to investigate the attitudes of teachers toward culturally sensitive constructivist teaching for African American students. This method investigated teacher attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and preparedness for teaching African American students in urban schools. The researcher expected before the study began that at the end of this study she would possess an increased understanding of teachers' attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and preparedness to teach culturally relevant, social justice principles to African American students.

#### Significance of the Study

This study was necessary because, although there has been much talk about providing equal education for all students in the United States, which brought about the No Child Left Behind Act, it is apparent that equality of education may be more of an injustice to African

American students than a benefit (Warikoo & Carter, 2009). Teaching Black children content with which they are unable to identify or using Eurocentric pedagogy, instead of strategies that will encourage participation and the development of identity and self-actualization, has led to failure for most of these students. They become passive learners, as suggested by Paulo Friere's banking method of teaching (Micheletti, 2010), rather than activists involved in their own learning and knowledge-creation. Consequently, they become bored, unresponsive, and unyielding, which leads to imminent failure.

To reverse this trend, a renewed revolutionary measure must be re-established to enable African American students to realize their full potential and to challenge the stereotypical label placed on them as low achievers. To accomplish this, this study hoped to support the idea that teachers need to employ culturally relevant teaching practices using central figures and ideas that students can relate to as teaching points. These teaching points should help students develop individual autonomy, self-actualization, self-realization, and self-understanding (Stone, 1981). It is only after students have developed the above skills and aspects that they will be able to fully understand group dynamics and how their own existence and purpose fit into that schema.

#### Definition of Key Terms

*Attitude.* A complex mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values, and dispositions to act in certain ways; a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

*Constructivist teaching.* Teaching that allows for an individual to construct his or her own ideas, meanings, and understanding as a means of learning. This is usually achieved when students can bring their cultural experiences and prior knowledge to..., and when given free range to make meaning of the world from their experiences (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Kaufman, 1996).

*Cultural Sensitivity.* Knowing that cultural differences, as well as similarities, exist, without assigning values, i.e., better or worse, right or wrong, to those cultural differences (Tucker & Herman, 2002).

*Culturally relevant.* A term inspired by the work of several African American scholars that refers to teaching to the diverse needs of students using cultural artifacts, language, ethnic referents, and cognitive and linguistic contexts familiar to children of color (Gay, 2000; Irvine-Jordan, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

*Culturally relevant pedagogy.* Teaching that is consistent with the values, behaviors, and historical context of the student (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

*Culture.* Implicit and explicit characteristics of a person that are developed through background and current experiences; knowledge dispositions, skills and ways of understanding that are informed by race (the social construction of one's skin), ethnicity (history, heritage, customs, rituals, values, symbols), identity (how one perceives and represents himself or herself), class (economic/resource situation), and gender (Milner, 2006).

*Diversity.* The variations in social and cultural identities among people existing together in a community; the state of having people who are different races or who have different culture in a group or organization (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

*Ethnicity.* Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken out in two categories, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics can report as any race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

*Equity pedagogy.* Pedagogy that is modified to meet the needs of diverse students and provides for equal representation of all groups (Banks & Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

*Perception.* The act or faculty of apprehending by means of the senses or the mind; cognition; understanding; a mental image (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

*Race.* The Census Bureau defines race as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can report as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander or some other race. Hispanics or Latinos may report as any race, as the federal policy defines "Hispanic" not as a race but as an ethnicity. And it prescribes that Hispanic can in fact be any race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017; Pew Research, 2015).

*Racism.* A pre-formed negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons who possess common physical characteristics including, but not limited to, skin color, hair texture, and /or other physical features; poor treatment of or violence against people because of their race (Merriam-Webster, 2015).

*Social justice.* [an] agenda that struggles to eliminate all forms of racial, gender, language, generation status, and class subordination (Bell, 2007; Closson, 2010).

*Social Conservative:* holding to traditional attitudes and values and cautious about change or innovation, typically in relation to politics or religion (Altemeyer, 1988).

*Sociology.* The study of human social relationships and institutions; the study of society, a social science involving the study of the cultural practices of people, groups, and societies. Sociology's subject matter is broad, ranging from politics to religion, to the state of education, race, and social class (ASA, 2015; Buechler, 2008).

*Teacher Expectations.* Inferences made about present and future academic achievement for students, specifically minorities (Nieto, 2003; Porter, 1997).

#### Limitations of the Research

This study presented many challenges but has the potential to yield important information regarding the attitudes teachers hold about teaching and learning for African American students. By design, this study used a small convenience sample, which is not statistically generalizable to larger populations. In addition, the results from this study are specific to the New York City Public Schools, an urban setting, which may not match factors found in suburban or rural areas. It also may not consider factors found in private and parochial schools. Therefore, the results from this study may be questionable in those areas. Another limitation is that the researcher chose to only concentrate on Black students, although there are other ethnic groups and subgroups that may have the same problems.

#### Summary and Philosophical Stance

Student success and failure follow patterns (Ryan, 2003). One of the most noticeable of these patterns involves ethnicity and cultural background. As more and more students from diverse backgrounds populate twenty-first century classrooms, and as efforts mount to identify effective methods for instructing these students, the need for culturally sensitive curriculum intensifies. Today's classrooms require teachers to educate students who vary widely in culture, language, ability, and many other characteristics (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). To meet this challenge, teachers must be sensitive to the unique needs of the learner and the development of a classroom environment that is conducive to success for all students, especially Black students (Gay, 2000).

The first two institutions that African Americans built from the ground up with their own hands and resources were schools and churches (Madhubuti, 1994). This indicated that education is very valuable to the African American people. Education could be a means through which children learn about, develop appreciation for, and practice the values of their culture.



Therefore, many African philosophers (Akoto, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Madhubuti, 1994; Woodson, 2008; Wilson, 1987) agreed that it is the responsibility of educators to teach African American children through an African worldview in both formal and informal educational settings where educators transmit cultural understandings by design.

It is this researcher's belief that, in all areas of the curriculum, African American students must receive culturally relevant learning experiences that will help to eradicate Eurocentric notions of the African being and replace them with strong African ideologies and learning outcomes. It is this researcher's belief that learning using a culturally sensitive constructivist teaching style that applies social justice principles is necessary for all racial/ethnic students to succeed. Doing so, African Americans legitimize African stores of knowledge and use that awareness to positively exploit, build upon, and scaffold productive community and cultural practices (Shujaa, 1994 & 1995). These students will begin to develop critical consciousness while promoting cultural continuity, but they will also become the major determinants of their own routes to success. Practices such as these may not only redirect the trend set for this population, but may also create Black individuals grounded in their identities and abilities. It should help to boost their confidence and, consequently, the expectations African scholars have of themselves and their peers. Therefore, it is essential to understand educators' attitudes and perceptions towards teaching culturally sensitive curriculum for African American students, as teachers are a major factor that determines the success and/or failure of students.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides an introduction, the background and purpose of the study, operational definitions, the significance of the study, the methodological overview, an interdisciplinary perspective, limitations, and a summary. Chapter 2 is the review of literature. It focuses on

reviewing relevant and scholarly literature that added to the body of knowledge concerning this topic. Chapter 3 provides a justification for the research guiding the study. It also includes the research design, the research questions, procedures, the participants, the types of data that the researcher collected, data analysis, limitations of the study, ethical issues, and a summary.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and Chapter 5 provides a summary and discussion of the findings.

## CHAPTER II

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT EDUCATION FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE  
TEACHERS WHO TEACH THEM

This chapter is a review of literature that focuses on teachers' attitudes towards culturally sensitive constructivist teaching, grounded in social justice principles. This researcher will report on related literature in the following areas: (a) race in education, (b) matters of race, (c) African American students in crisis, (d) differences in cultural practices, (e) racial and cultural identity development, (f) intellectual property, (g) culturally relevant pedagogy, (h) curriculum and instruction for African Americans, (i) teachers' attitudes and perceptions, (j) practices and environments that foster success, (k) and social and constructivist theory.

The researcher selected these areas for review because there has been much discussion in the literature about teachers' attitudes towards instructing African American students. The literature noted that teachers' attitudes towards students are one of the major predictors of students' academic success. Researchers conceptualized this attention to teaching and learning for African American students as social justice based culturally sensitive constructivist teaching. This chapter will closely examine the historical significant of race in education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and attitudes teachers hold towards teaching African American students.

## Race in Education

An analysis of the persistent failure of African American students requires a framework that exposes the realities of race in education. Delgado (2002) based his critical race theory (CRT) framework upon the premise that Americans wove racism into the fabric of American society and it has become a normal part of its structures (Brand & Wallace, 2012). Many scholars have often referred to critical race theory as a means of explaining how race and racism

have negatively impacted education for ethnic students (Closson, 2010). Therefore, for this study, this researcher selected critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework for understanding how and why racism has been ingrained in education and traditional curricula, and how racism has played a major role in the achievement gap between African American and European American students (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Garrison-Wade and Sampson, 2010).

Researchers Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) presented seven arguments that were particularly related to the role of race in education: (1) in 2009, racism was a normal part of American life, but it was often distinctively unrecognized and, thus, difficult to eliminate or address. They further argued that CRT unveiled the various forms in which racism continually manifested itself, despite espoused institutional values regarding equity; (2) CRT rejected the notion of a colorblind society. Thus, it argued that colorblindness led to misconceptions concerning racial fairness in institutions; (3) CRT gave voice to the unique perspectives and lived experiences of ethnic people. CRT also used counter-narratives to highlight the stories of people of color and challenged the universality assumption and stereotypes about people of color in education; (4) CRT exposed interest-convergence, the process whereby the White power structure “will tolerate or encourage racial advances for Blacks only when they also promote White self-interests” (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv; Harper, Patton, Wooden, 2009); (5) Another tenet of CRT suggested that American history should be closely scrutinized and reinterpreted, as opposed to being accepted at face value as truth, for a more nuanced understanding of historical events; (6) CRT not only recognized race as a social construct, but also realized that racism was a means by which society allocated privileges, status, and high-quality education. In addition, CRT pointed to slavery as the inception of prejudice and discrimination; and (7) CRT was

critical of claims of meritocracy that sustain White supremacy (Cleveland, Hughes & Noblit, 2013; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009).

Bell (1988) claimed that if we understood CRT's basic tenets we could better understand social justice, educational inequities, social consciousness, and hegemony in educational settings. Many other critical race theorists agreed with Bell's notion of how racism contaminated education in America. They, too, insisted that to address issues of race, specifically in education, one must understand the origin of racism, a heavily rooted component of American life. They also attested that Americans ingrained race through historical and ideological consciousness which has trickled down into American educational systems.

Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) stated that CRT explained three central beliefs of mainstream culture that people must consistently challenge: (a) blindness to race eliminates racism, (b) racism was a matter of individuals, not systems, and (c) one can fight racism without paying attention to sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, and other forms of oppression or injustice. When society maintained such beliefs through legal, educational, and sociopolitical channels, society silenced students of color, low-income persons, and other disenfranchised populations.

Thus, scholars such as Bell (1988), Delgado (2002), Harris (1993), Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), Matsuda (1987), and Williams (1987) inserted race into the power and privilege components of educational systems. They explained how racism often resulted in oppression and marginalization for many groups, especially African Americans, while, on the other hand, it created power and privilege for others. They concluded that teachers must understand their own biases and the experiences they bring to the educational arena to monitor unconscious and conscious practices that maintain educational inequities.

Richards, Brown, and Forde (2004) defined CRT as pedagogy that facilitated and supported the achievement of all students. They stated that in a culturally sensitive classroom, effective teaching and learning occurred in a culturally supported, learner-centered context, where teachers identified, nurtured, and utilized the strengths students brought to school to promote student achievement.

#### Matters of Race

Chapman (2013) drew on previous accounts of educational inequality to expose matters of racism in education. She exposed macro and micro forms of racism disguised as traditional school curriculum, teachers' beliefs, and expectations of African American learners. She argued that, historically, the legacy of desegregation litigation continued to significantly impact the schooling experiences of all students in US schools. She said that children in today's schools are the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and the descendants of such policy mandates as cross-town busing, open enrollment, inter-district enrollment, charter schools, voucher schools, comprehensive reforms, orders, tax levies, and multicultural education -- all of which stemmed from decades of litigation to secure equitable schooling for non-White children. She further said that the schooling experiences of children in the US, particularly for urban and suburban children, were the manifestations of political and social acts by stakeholders who continually pushed for/opposed greater access to an equitable education based on issues of race and racism.

Chapman (2013) analyzed the following themes that represented multiple concepts of CRT: colorblindness, interest-convergence, racial realism, and White privilege, all which Chapman explained how common school policies and practices, such as, tracking, traditional curricula, teacher classroom practices, teacher prejudices, and student surveillance created a

racially hostile environment for Black American students in school. These normative school practices inhibited ethnic students from fully engaging in school and, therefore, from securing equitable schooling experiences. In her examination of racism in schools, she uncovered the ways in which schools remained complicit with racially stratified educational practices. She also noted that in the case of most of the schools she studied, higher tracks of curriculum served as the property of White students. Few ethnic students were able to access the rigorous curricular experience that led to greater college access. These stratifications maintained a desegregated context, rather than an integrated one, and reinforced the White supremacist ideology that Black students were intellectually inferior. Furthermore, she found that when asked how students chose their courses, many of them explained that counselors and teachers played major roles in placing them into their current classes. Because most often Black students have matriculated in these districts since kindergarten, researchers cannot dismiss their track position as Black students who had transferred to suburban high schools from lower status urban middle schools. The placement of Black students into lower tracks reflected 40 years of conversations about how administrators tracked students into classes based on race and socioeconomic status at an early age and how these students could not cross into upper tracks later in their schooling careers. Ferguson (2003) argued

“Stereotypes of Black intellectual inferiority is reinforced by past and present disparities in performance and probably cause teachers to underestimate Blacks potential more than Whites. If they expected that Black children have less potential, teachers probably search with less conviction than they should for ways of helping Black children to improve and miss opportunities to reduce the Black-White test score-gap” (p. 494).

Chapman (2013) also reported that “colorblind racism” (p.614) saturated educational spaces. She further explained that the ways in which people acted upon colorblind racism varied across different contexts, but the outcomes were the same. She also believed that colorblind racism constricted the learning and development of Black students and maintained White privilege by further marginalizing Black students in academic settings. In most White suburban schools, adults and Black students blatantly demonstrated colorblind racism. Curricular and behavior policies documented subtler enactments of colorblind racism. Additionally, she asserted that current policy mandates of public schooling practices promoted White privilege and racial inequities.

Lopez (2006) explained that when one allowed colorblindness free reign in society, Black students were especially affected. When they exposed and spoke out against racist practices, people labeled Black students as trouble. Lopez asserted that the trap of colorblindness neither initiated conversation about the influence of race nor did it empower those who experienced discrimination to argue their case. Moreover, people further cast black students as outsiders and troublemakers, making it more difficult for them to successfully matriculate through schools. Schools in the U.S. cannot erase race. The enforcement of colorblindness served to exacerbate, not alleviate, issues of race and racism for Black students. The colorblind ideology/color-conscious practices in schools served as an alternate explanation for blaming the victim for under-achievement, racial isolation, and academic disinterest in majority race schools; and it placed the burden of school reform on policy makers and educators to dismantle and reconstruct systemic approaches and practices in the education system (Chapman, 2013).

Diamond (2006) stated:



“Students of color remain deeply impacted by racist schooling practices that they are not allowed to name in their schools, however no matter how integrated schools are they still (to the extent that they have existed) have failed to create equal opportunity for all students, in part, because racial inequality in the society as a whole or within the schools, in numerous cases, has not been directly confronted” (p.502).

Garrison-Wade and Sampson (2010) argued that CRT analyzed the individual and complex system issues that created inequities in education, and it also helped shed light on systems that continued to subjugate and maintain power and disequilibrium for the African American child. In addition, they asserted that past and present historical events fostered the context that created a specific learning environment. They explained how everyday experiences of racism within institutional policies and social norms created and sustained barriers to students' current and future academic success. Thus, these researchers believed that critical race theory acknowledged that power, privileges, and inequities were inherent in society, and specifically in school settings, and impacted the mis-education of African American children. Moreover, they provided an explanation for attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and expectations that teachers held about African American students. They explained that the issues of race and racism in society portrayed by media, government, and institutions influenced teachers to adopt (consciously or unconsciously) negative attitudes about African American students (Garrison-Wade and Sampson, 2010). Thus, the essence of critical race theory is to understand that “race does matter” (Brand & Wallace, 2012).

Several other scholars concluded that African American students were aware of racist practices in their schools and absorbed subliminal messages in the school environment about both themselves and collectively as a group. The students believed that these messages often

devalued them and failed to embrace their culture. Additionally, they felt that these messages and practices helped to maintain the notion that White is right and Black is wrong, causing these many ethnic students to seek to assimilate to be accepted by Whites and to distance themselves, actively or passively, from their Black identity (Banks, 2006; Garrison-Wade and Sampson, 2010).

#### African American Students in Crisis

The Declaration of Independence states that "All men are created equal." Despite this decree, citizens often treated African Americans differently than European Americans in many parts of the country, especially in the South. In fact, many state legislatures enacted laws that led to the legally mandated segregation of the races. In other words, the laws of many states decreed that Blacks and Whites could not use the same public facilities, ride the same buses, attend the same schools, etc. Legislators named these laws Jim Crow laws. Even after legislators abolished these laws, and fifty years after Brown (1954), the status of African-Americans in public schools only improved marginally; indeed, in some cases it deteriorated (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c). Therefore, it is apparent that all were not achieving equally, especially in education (NCES, 2001c).

Tucker & Herman (2002) reported that after decades of trying to eradicate educational disparities between African American children and European American children, the gap widened by most indicators. However, other studies revealed improvements that some ethnic students made. But, in comparison to White students, those improvements were minor, particularly for Blacks.

Whaley & Noel (2010) further examined educational disparities but focused primarily on explanations. They concluded that the most common explanation reported was teachers' biases

and negative perceptions and beliefs about the academic achievement of African American students. Additionally, they reported that large numbers of African-American males may have dropped out of school and/or did not perform well on standardized assessments because of stereotypical attitudes and behaviors.

Young, Wright and Laster (2005) reported that the lack of high quality instruction in the classroom caused constant struggles for many African American students. Per Young et al., African-American children are a major ethnicity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but they have experienced the most detrimental treatment in school due to a lack of equity in the content taught to them in these institutions. The researchers reported that it was unjust to say that there was fairness in how and what African American students learned. They argued that teachers taught Black students using watered-down curricula that did not reflect their homes or their communities. Teachers taught using curricula designed for White students that matched White culture. The investigators felt that equity for African Americans could not truly be achieved, even with unlimited access to funds and resources, without teachers first having knowledge of how African Americans learn best, as well as understanding the significance of culture in learning, and reversing the stereotypes and attitudes that they held about their African American students.

For more than a decade, anthropologists and educators alike examined ways to make education equitable by looking for ways to better match teaching with the home and community cultures of ethnic/racial students who had previously not had academic success in schools. American public schools traditionally used a monolithic model of instruction, in which the organization of teaching, learning, and performance was compatible with the social structure of the dominant culture. According to Tharp (1989), teachers expected that all students learned based on traditional patterns of cognitive functioning and instructional patterns. The truth is,

however, that only learners whose cognitive functioning corresponded to these patterns likely succeeded. Tharp and others asserted that many African American, Hispanic American, and Native American learners had difficulty with these traditional patterns of cognitive functioning because the customary school patterns ignored the impact culture had on their language, learning, and thinking (Franklin, 1992).

At one point, many African Americans argued from a position of sameness (Tate, Ladson-Billings, & Grant, 1993). That is, they asserted that Black and White children were alike and deserved the same educational opportunities. This rhetoric of equality meant sameness tended to ignore the distinctive qualities of African American culture and suggested that if schools made schooling experiences identical for African Americans by providing extra funding and resources they would somehow produce identical results (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Akoto (1992) asserted that it would be an unfair assumption to say that teachers exposed Black children to the same kind of education that White children received because education is, by definition, culturally referenced. Thus, he believed that content fed to African American students could not be constituted as education. He argued that White children could easily absorb the principles, values, and content teachers taught in schools because they were part of their culture, but the same was not true for Black children.

Researcher Shujaa (1994) concluded that teachers were not educating African Americans to become doctors, poets, writers, scientists or engineers because teachers believed that they could not achieve in those capacities. Furthermore, he believed that this way of seeing African American students was one consequence of slavery. Shujaa argued that slavery created a society where White people felt superior to Black people. He further proclaimed that White supremacists viewed Blacks as genetically inferior and not fully human. Thus, their expectations

for educating Black children were low (Shujaa, 1994). Teachers trained African Americans at most for manual labor and domestic service (Anderson, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2000). This system of educating Blacks contributed to the dishonoring of the African American culture.

Shujaa (1994) found that teachers taught African American students the historical deeds and values of the dominant culture. This did nothing to advance them and/or their Black communities. Most of what teachers taught them about life was neither life sustaining nor life giving. Hence, in school, they were not able to rely on the knowledge and experiences that they had developed from their homes and communities. Madhubuti (1994) proclaimed that instead of remedying the problem of persistent failure, educators and policy makers often looked for the answers to the problem from the same people who were responsible for the problem, the European curriculum developers.

Jenks and Phillips (1998) discovered that African Americans scored lower on vocabulary and reading and math tests, as well as on tests that measured scholastic aptitude and intelligence. They also stated that the typical American Black difference in achievement began before kindergarten and extended into adulthood. Although the gap has narrowed since 1970, in 1998, Black student scores were still statistically below the average White student's score on standardized tests. Lee (2002) further explained this gap because of schooling conditions and practices that were crippling, particularly for African racial and ethnic groups.

#### Differences in Cultural Practices

One of the major practices teachers overlooked when it came to African American children was that many educational reformers failed to consider differences in cultural child-rearing practices. Young (1970) conducted a study that examined child-rearing practices of White families and Black families. It was reported that White children were more object-

oriented, having available to them as infants' numerous manipulative objects and discovery properties. Conversely, Black children were person-oriented. As infants, their mothers or another family member held them most of the time and gave them few objects. When African American infants reached for an object or felt a surface, adults immediately redirected their attention to the person holding them, thereby reducing the value of material objects. Similarly, Lewis (1975) and Dougherty (1978) observed extensive interaction among African-American family members and infants involving touching, kissing, and holding the baby's hands (Franklin, 1992).

Young (1970) observed other interactive techniques between African American mothers and their children. For example, mothers and children used a contest style of speech in which they volleyed rhythmically. Adults taught children to be assertive and to develop their individual styles. African American mothers gave directions for household chores in a call-and-response pattern, an interactive style found in some African American music. African American parents also valued creative functioning in their children, that is, they were not immediately frustrated by their children's typical childhood behavior and encouraged its development (Franklin, 1992). Engram (1982) found that adults socialized African-American children early regarding the realities of racism and poverty in society and told children they must be twice as good if they were to succeed. Parents and families exposed many African American children to high-energy, fast-paced home environments where there were simultaneous variable stimulations (e.g., televisions and music playing simultaneously and people talking and moving in and about the home freely). Hence, low-energy, monolithic environments found in many traditional school environments were less stimulating (Franklin, 1992).

Cultural difference theory argued that there were different ways of looking at, understanding, and acting in the world that existed among people who came from different groups who lived together. In *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles*, Hale-Benson (1986) presented the case that differences in child-rearing practices, cognitive patterns, and behaviors caused cultural discontinuity for African American children in European American schools. Foster (1992) addressed the differences in communication styles, or the sociolinguistics, of African Americans and European Americans. She documented the organizational, stylistic, and thematic differences in narratives of African American and European American children, arguing that the cultural and linguistic discontinuity between home and school for children of color affected the school performance of African American students (Bacon, Banks, Young and Jackson, 2007). They also found that research and dialogue on differential treatment, culturally responsive instruction, and cultural discontinuity, coupled with racial and cultural identity development, provided a more in-depth understanding of school factors that led to disproportionate rates of failure for African Americans.

In a large observational study, Tyler, Boykin, Miller, and Hurley (2006) found a cultural mismatch between African American students and their schools. The effects of this cultural mismatch were inverse relationships between students' cultural mistrust and motivation for success, as measured by the importance and desirability of goals attainable with formal education.

### Racial and Cultural Identity Development

Several researchers argued that people needed to see the world of the African American child through the perspective of racial identity development, which assisted in understanding the self-esteem and identity component of the African American psyche (Garrison-Wade and

Sampson, 2010; Sheets and Hollins, 1999; Tatum, 1997). Racial identity development became an important concept, as ethnic students did not leave their racial and ethnic identities at the school door. Rather, they brought their language, style, movement, cultural realities, and differences to their school experiences daily (Garrison-Wade and Sampson, 2010). Teachers' misunderstanding of the African American child's racial identity development produced multiple invalidating experiences for teachers, and, more importantly, for students (Swanson, Cunningham, Youngblood & Spencer, 2009).

Ladson-Billings (2001) described culturally competent teachers as:

Teachers who... do not spend their time trying to be hip and cool and "down" with their students. They know enough about students' cultural and individual life circumstances to be able to communicate well with them. They understand the need to study the students because they believe there is something there worth learning. They know that students who have the academic and cultural wherewithal to succeed in school without losing their identities are better prepared to be of service to others; in democracy, this commitment to the public good is paramount (p.5).

Researchers Chavez and Guidi-DiBrito (1999) reported that racial and ethnic identities were critical parts of the overall make-up of individual and collective (group) identity. In the United States, people manifested racial and ethnic identities in very conscious ways. Social and cultural influences triggered the manifestations most often. First, deep conscious immersion into cultural traditions and values through religious, familial, neighborhood, and educational communities instilled a positive sense of ethnic identity and confidence. Second, and in contrast, individuals often filtered ethnic identity through negative treatment and media messages received from others because of their race and ethnicity. These messages made it clear that people with



ethnic status had a different ethnic make-up-- one that was less than desirable within mainstream society. Others, especially White Americans, manifested their ethnic and racial identity in mostly unconscious ways through their behaviors, values, beliefs, and assumptions. For them, ethnicity was usually invisible and unconscious because people had constructed societal norms around their racial, ethnic, and cultural frameworks, values, and priorities and these norms were referred to as standard American culture, rather than as ethnic identity. This unconscious ethnic identity manifested itself in daily behaviors, attitudes, and ways of doing things. Unlike in many minority cultures, people did not consciously instill specific identity through White communities, nor did they identify differential ethnic treatment in the media of White culture. Chavez and Guidi-DiBrito (1999) also argued that teachers who stated that they did not see color and differences did not provide Black children with favoritism; rather, they validated White privilege and negated racial identity development by refusing to acknowledge the social, political, and economic differences that existed between Black and White families. Fry and Kochlar (2014) argued similar points. They reported that the wealth of White households was 13 times the median wealth of Black households. They also argued that this difference in wealth transmitted into social and political differences as well.

Several researchers argued that teachers who adhered to the color-blind ideology of not noticing racial differences may have minimized differences and emphasized similarities. Thus, they contended that color-blind practices hindered children's natural process for developing their racial and ethnic identities during a crucial time of their development of racial cognition. They further expressed that this thwarted the child's ability to engage in constructive discourse and to develop racial conceptions and beliefs, essential for developing sophisticated reasoning. They further found that color-blind ideology caused several setbacks within the school environment.

First, school personnel's failure to acknowledge cultural differences influenced the different ways that White and Black students functioned and succeeded in school and caused several misinterpretations and misunderstandings of student behavior, often resulting in increased disciplinary action toward Black students. Second, teachers' color-blindness enabled them to believe that implementing course material that reflected this new diversity was irrelevant, since race did not matter, and, consequently, Black students were unable to see themselves as validated in the curriculum, especially relevant for the school achievement of African American students (Choi, 2008; Delpit 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Several studies looked at the chances of increasing school achievement for African Americans. They concluded that when compared to non-African American schoolmates, with experienced educators who understood their sociocultural knowledge and considered cultural factors when designing, implementing, and evaluating instruction, African American students performed highly (Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Ellison, Boykin, Towns & Strokes, 2000).

Neal, McCray, Wedd-Johnson, & Bridgest (2003) extended the explanation that suggested that if teachers maintained high standards and expectations for students' social, behavioral and academic competence, created caring and supportive learning environments that promoted students' cultural identities, and encouraged high academic performance, students would achieve academically. They also explained that these teaching practices mirrored the child-rearing practices of African American families and helped to foster healthy racial and cultural identity.

Ladson-Billings (2000) expressed that if we understood the way in which oppression has worked against many groups of people, based on their race, culture, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, then we understood the impact of race in education.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) stated:

“Successfully teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds-especially students from historically marginalized groups - involves more than just applying specialized teaching techniques. It demands a new way of looking at teaching that is grounded in an understanding of the role of culture and language in learning. A central role of the culturally and linguistically responsive teacher is to support students’ learning by helping them build bridges between what they already know about a topic and what they need to learn about it” (p. 29).

### Intellectual Property

People used the concept of curriculum as intellectual property to explicate re-instantiations of White privilege and supremacy in schools. Curriculum as intellectual property or curriculum property was how the materials, programs, rules, structure, and pedagogies of the school re-instantiated White privilege. People showed the reinstantiation of White privilege through the absence of racially diverse content and critical stances to examine power and privilege, regulations targeting racial groups, hierarchies of extra-curricular activities in which ethnic students dominated the lower echelons, and tracking. The school curriculum, in its broadest sense, became the tool for further marginalization and maintenance of the status quo, rather than a tool of empowerment and social change. Furthermore, the colorblind discourses in schools prevented Black students from having meaningful exchanges with adults and maintained the curriculum’s role of intellectual property for White students. Curricula such as these sent subliminal messages of teachers’ policies and systems that expressed negative attitudes towards African American students (Blanchett, 2006; Dash, 2005; Farkas, 2003; Gordon, 2000; Oakes, 1992).

*Other Factors That Influence Education for African Americans*

In addition to intellectual property, there was tracking, a deleterious grouping practice teachers employed to place minority students into lower ability courses (Dash, 2005; Oakes, 1992). Oakes (1992) reported that tracking and ability grouping began as early as third grade. Because of tracking and ability grouping, minority students were at risk of being ill-prepared to participate in college preparatory courses, and the chance of these students securing white-collar jobs in later years became limited (Farkas, 2003).

Blanchett (2006) further explained factors that influenced education for African Americans. She proclaimed that United States teacher preparation programs failed to prepare teachers to teach all students effectively. This attributed to the achievement gap. She argued that most teachers continued to enter public school classrooms unprepared “to effectively teach African American and other students of color” (p.27). New teachers began teaching with little to no knowledge of themselves as racial beings or of social groups outside of their own and were unprepared to identify, implement, or assess culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies (Bell, L.A., 2002; Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Cross, 2005; Juarez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008).

Several researchers reported that in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teachers in the United States remained predominantly White, female, and monolingual (English) (National Summit on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2002; Sleeter, 2001; National Center for Education Information (NCEI), 2011). Other researchers found that teacher education preparation programs in the United States employed an overwhelmingly White professoriate (Gordon, 2000; Juarez et al., 2008; National Center for Education Statistics, 2002; NCEI, 2011). Some researchers argued that White educators, not insignificantly, tended to have negative views about

racial differences and low academic and behavioral expectations for students of color (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Douglas, Douglas, Lewis, Scott, Garrison-Wade, 2008; Fuller, 1992; Terrell & Mark, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). “To be born Black within the U.S. [still] means to be disproportionately represented among the poor, the incarcerated, the unemployed, the sick, the under-educated, and the under-nourished; and amongst those awaiting state-sanctioned execution on death row” (Joseph, 2001, p. 54). No longer was it acceptable, indeed if it ever was, for teacher preparation programs to keep proclaiming their own report cards as A+ in preparing future teachers for working in culturally diverse society and to keep sailing through their NCATE accreditation reviews largely unimpeded (Gollnick, 1995; Juarez & Hayes, 2010) while continuing to graduate teachers “with many of their prior negative perceptions of ‘Blackness’ [and other forms of difference] and their prejudice, racism, and sense of entitlement regarding White privilege intact and completely unchallenged” (Blanchett, 2006, p. 27). White teachers represented 84% of the public schools’ teachers in 2011 (National Center for Education Information, 2011). Thus, researchers see a critical need to prepare the nation’s teachers to work thoughtfully and effectively with diverse populations.

Several other researchers argued that the factors that influenced the achievement gap resulted from biased standardized tests, while others believed that the achievement gap widened by low representation of minority teachers at the college preparatory, honors, and AP levels (Moses-Snipes & Snipes, 2005). A small segment of scholars offered poverty as a serious challenge to children’s access to quality learning opportunities and their potential to succeed in school. Research suggested that growing up in poverty negatively affected children’s well-being, therefore making it more difficult for boys and girls to learn and engage in a healthy educational learning environment. Furthermore, the overall percentages of families with

children in poverty were higher for African American families than White families. In a study that concentrated on fourth grade students who attended low-poverty schools and those who attended high-poverty schools, the authors noted that the children also differed by race and ethnicity. Only 4% of African American fourth graders attended schools in the lowest poverty level (Massey, 2004; Massey, Rothwell, & Domina, 2009). In fact, African American fourth graders were more likely to attend high-poverty schools (Massey 2004; Massey et al., 2009) where most students were minorities. Relatively small proportions of African American children attended school with low minority enrollment (Armario, 2010).

Many schools in the nation's urban centers were in communities with high rates of poverty and crime. Nationally, most urban students eligibly received subsidized school lunches and attended schools defined by the U.S. Department of Education as high-poverty schools. It is apparent from the literature that a neighborhood's socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic composition, population turnover and loss, and family structure affected children's ability to have safe and productive lives. It is not surprising that schools in such communities inherited the difficulties of the communities, as well as the problems the children who lived there experienced, which made educating Black students challenging (Condrón, Tope, Steidl, & Freeman, 2013; Johnson, 2010).

An issue that one cannot neglect is the lack of funds, resources, and staffing for many of the schools attended by African American children. Poor school districts received the least amount of funding, resources, and staff to support the diverse needs that Black students had. People expected teachers to not only be good teachers and motivate their students in these conditions, but also to address multiple social and emotional issues (Williams, Horvath, Wei, Van Dorn, & Jonson-Reid, 2007).

*Factors That Contribute to the Achievement Gap that are Within Schools' Control and Outside Schools' Control.*

Within Schools' Control	Outside Schools' Control
<p><i>School-wide Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Low expectations for student achievement.</li> <li>✓ Lack of rigor in the curriculum.</li> <li>✓ Large class size.</li> <li>✓ Tracking groups of students into a less demanding curriculum.</li> <li>✓ Unsafe schools.</li> <li>✓ Culturally unfriendly environments.</li> <li>✓ Poor instructional leadership.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Factors in the Local Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Economic opportunity for students' families.</li> <li>✓ Access to health and social services.</li> <li>✓ Community safety.</li> <li>✓ Access to libraries, museums, and other institutions that support students' development.</li> <li>✓ Access to childcare and after-school programs and facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Teacher- and Teaching-Related Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Uncertified and inexperienced teachers.</li> <li>✓ Insensitivity to different cultures.</li> <li>✓ Poor teacher preparation.</li> <li>✓ Low student expectations.</li> <li>✓ Inadequate materials, equipment, resources, including technology-based resources.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Students' Background</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Families' income level.</li> <li>✓ Students' birth weight.</li> <li>✓ Students' diet and nutrition at home.</li> <li>✓ Students' mobility.</li> <li>✓ Students' primary language (if other than English).</li> </ul>
<p><i>Student-Related Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Students' interest in school.</li> <li>✓ Students' level of effort.</li> <li>✓ Students' feeling that they are, in part, responsible for their learning.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Education Funding Shortfalls</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ State budget deficits.</li> <li>✓ Unfunded federal mandates.</li> <li>✓ Inequities in funding among school districts.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Families' Support of Students' Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Families' participation in school activities.</li> <li>✓ Families' skills to support and reinforce learning.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Families' Support of Students' Learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Time family members can devote to support and reinforce learning.</li> </ul>

Source: National Education Association (NEA.org, 2002-2015).

*Prenatal Care*

Shenkin, Starr, and Deary (2004) reported that Black Americans were almost twice as likely as Whites to have a low birth weight child, and they were 270% more likely to have a very low birth weight child. Low birth weight children often had a low Apgar score, a composite based on five variables measured immediately after birth: Appearance, Pulse, Grimace, Activity, and Respiration. Low Apgar scores indicated various problems that often included neurological damage. Black American newborns had low Apgar scores twice as often as did other races. Many low birth weight children displayed cognitive and behavioral difficulties soon after birth, often due to hemorrhaging and oxygen deficiencies affecting brain function, particularly memory. Other birth-weight-related deficits, behavioral as well as cognitive, did not show until school began. A mother's prenatal condition and her mental and physical health affected an infant's later cognitive and behavioral functioning. It was clear that the lack of prenatal care attributed to the achievement gap (Martin, & Dombrowski, 2008).

*Health Care*

Denavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith (2008) argued that few would deny that it would be a challenge to learn easily, or to meet high academic standards, if a child had unmet needs for medical care. Similarly, few denied the increased challenge of 12 of 52 teaching classes where excessive student illness was substantially more common. Yet, they further asserted that medical insurance moderated these challenges for many students and their teachers. In 2007, the number of those in the U.S. without health insurance was 45.7 million, or 15.3% of the population. The number of children under 18 years of age without insurance was 8.1 million, or 11% of all children. These data did not include the additional children and adults covered by insurance policies that required large copayments or had limited coverage, discouraging those with such



policies from seeking needed medical care or from purchasing needed medication. Thus, the underinsured added to the educational challenges a school faced due to illnesses among the uninsured. Furthermore, researchers gathered the troubling data cited above before the downturn of the economy and the large loss of jobs in 2008, a trend predicted to continue throughout 2009 and beyond. Given the employer-supplied insurance system in the United States, increasing unemployment swelled the ranks of the medically uninsured, increasing the challenges public schools faced due to illness among students. These patterns had consequences for children's school achievement. This research confirmed that childhood illness and injury did affect school performance. Moreover, having medical insurance improved an individual's academic achievement, most simply by reducing absenteeism, as those with frequent or longer-term illnesses received less instruction and had lower achievement than another group with less illness for less time who received more instruction. Accordingly, the researchers concluded that poor urban and rural children, as well as racial and ethnic minority children, were groups that showed lower academic achievement, possibly correlated with medical situations.

New York City, like other major urban areas, has high poverty rates, with poverty concentrated by neighborhood, which affects school attendance. For example, during the 2007-2008 school year, in 12 of New York City's 32 school districts, well over 25% of primary school children were chronically absent from school. Researchers defined chronically absent as missing more than 20 school days per school year—more than 10% of the school year. In five of these districts, fully 30% of primary school children, kindergarten through fifth grade, were chronically absent. And, perhaps most shockingly, in six of these districts, between 8% and 11% of primary school children missed 38 or more days of school during the 2007-2008 school year. In that year, at least 30% of the children were chronically absent in 123 individual New York

City primary schools. In 96 of the city's 366 middle schools, more than 30% of children were also chronically absent. In 27 of those schools, more than 40% were chronically absent. In fact, norms for not going to school developed in some neighborhoods. Some elementary and middle schools, all from the same zip code in the Bronx, had norms for non-attending school that were almost as powerful as the norms to attend school (Ma, Kouznetsova, Lessner, & Carpenter, 2011; NEA, 2015). From a third to a half of the students at these schools were chronic school non-attenders, which made it difficult for these schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress. Unless people addressed out of school factors (e.g. neighborhood poverty, health care, immigration status, and mental health problems), the achievement gap continued to widen (NEA, 2015).

#### *Food Security*

Fortunately, food security in 2007 was adequate in almost 90% of U.S. households. But, researchers recorded food insecurity in more than 10% of U.S. households, affecting about 13 million homes that had difficulty providing enough food for all their members. More seriously, researchers classified about one-third of the food insecure households, totaling about 4.7 million households and representing just over 4% of all U.S. household, as having very low food security, a category representing more severe deprivation. And, in over 20% of the households with very low food security, one or more members reported that on three or more days per month they had nothing to eat (Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2008). In addition, in many urban areas, 90% of the students could receive free or reduced fee lunch, indicating that they were low-income families. These children were more often deprived of the nutrients needed daily, therefore effecting these students' ability to focus in school. One study of literacy achievement found that the lack of adequate food supply in certain neighborhoods was a factor in achievement for many minority families (Garner & Raudenbush, 1991).

*Housing*

In another study, researchers scaled a neighborhood to reflect socio-demographic characteristics, including overall unemployment rate, youth unemployment rate, number of single-parent families, percentage of low-earning wage earners, overcrowding, and permanently sick individuals. In this study, researchers found significant school-to-school variance in achievement, even when controlling for family background and neighborhood characteristics, based on factors related to housing or lack of housing. This study and many others demonstrated that non-school related effects on achievement were real and powerful (Nauer, White, & Yerneni, 2008).

Research findings suggested that what happened to children early in life had a profound impact on their later achievement. Children who entered school not yet ready to learn continued to have difficulty later in life. Researcher Michael Sadowski (2004) explained that the achievement gap existed before age 3. He argued that prekindergarten could not fully offset the differences in learning ability, already deeply implanted before prekindergarten age. Sadowski said that an effective effort to substantially narrow the achievement gap must include the offer of high-quality early childhood programs to infants and toddlers from low-income families where, for example, teachers exposed these children to more complex adult language to which middle class parents routinely exposed their toddlers. As fewer Black and low income than White and middle-class infants, toddlers, and preschoolers enrolled in such high-quality programs, such disparities compounded differences in home environments.

Although these factors affected academic achievement, numerous scholars also suggested that the caliber of the nation's teaching force directly related to the achievement gap. They

agreed that teachers were the most important factor in closing the ethnic/racial achievement gap (Ikpa, 2004).

### Attitude Formation

“Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.1). “In the course of a person’s life, his experiences lead to the formation of many different beliefs about various objects, actions, and events” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 217). Humans were not born with attitudes. People form attitudes at later stages of development and could change them, often through various positive or negative experiences that caused a shift in a person’s beliefs (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

In the study of attitude formation and attitude change, there were many proposed theories, such as, the theories of operant conditioning and observational learning. Operant conditioning is “a type of learning in which the consequences of behavior are manipulated to increase or decrease that behavior in the future” (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991, p. 144). If an educator experienced a negative experience with a Black student, he or she would be more unlikely to view Black students with a positive attitude and would possibly be unwilling to participate in culturally relevant teaching (Bohner & Wanke, 2002).

Additionally, researchers demonstrated that people could form or change attitudes via observational learning. “What people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25) and/or react to others. Bandura (1997) argued that self-efficacy influences attitude formation, attitude change, and behavior. “Self-efficacy (personal beliefs about one’s capabilities to perform particular behaviors) plays a major role in social cognitive theory, serving as one key mechanism through which people help to steer their own courses”

(Lent & Maddux, 1997, p. 241). A teacher's belief in his/her efficacy with students can directly affect student performance. "Social cognitive theory maintains that efficacy beliefs influence the choices that people make, as well as the effort and perseverance with which they engage in tasks" (Brownell & Pajares, 1999, p. 2). Teachers who possessed the attitude that they were effective teachers typically were. As reported by Troia and Maddox (2004), "Teachers' confidence in their ability to help their students succeed exerts a direct influence on their classroom routines and consequently their students' motivation and success" (p. 19). "Attitudes are a factor in one's daily living and therefore play an important role in an educator's daily interactions with students" (Parasuram, 2006, p. 232). Therefore, teachers' attitudes can directly affect student performance within the classroom.

#### Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions

Teachers' attitudes and perceptions both influenced and moderated learners' academic achievement. Villegas (1991) argued that an effective teacher had the ability to create meaningful and successful learning activities that took into consideration the learner's culture and background experiences (Franklin, 1992). Research revealed that teachers held beliefs about students based on race/ethnicity, language, social class, gender, religion, ability/disability, and other differences, and these beliefs led teachers to differential expectations and treatment of their students (Diller & Moule, 2005; Sparapany et al., 1995). If schools serve the needs and interests of increasingly diverse student populations, then one must identify, challenge and reconstruct low teacher expectations, negative stereotypes, biases, and cultural misconceptions (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). Many feelings, beliefs, and attitudes toward differences reflected culture and society (Matsumoto, 2000). As a microcosm of society, the school often replicated societal inequities in its broad policies and its specific curricular and instructional practices. When

unexamined, education tended to proceed as business-as-usual and, in the process, perpetuated the status quo (Brint, Conteras, & Matthews, 2001).

Hernandez (1989) reported that experiences within the same classroom varied for each child, mostly related to ethnicity. He elaborated by stating that teacher expectations and the attention shown to majority and minority students varied greatly, as did the quality of teacher-student interactions. Direct and indirect messages conveyed low expectations and contributed to the academic performance and achievement of many students. The research and literature clearly showed that teachers' expectations were critical in decreasing the number of academically at-risk students (Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). Teachers' beliefs about the academic ability and achievement level of students influenced their instructional and evaluative decisions in the classroom (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996).

Other researchers also concluded that teachers' expectations had a significant impact on student achievement. Teachers' negative attitudes and expectations produced a self-fulfilling prophecy concerning Black children that may have contributed to the achievement gap (Ferguson, 1998; Good & Weinstein, 1986; Goodlad, 1984; Ladson-Billings, 1994). When a teacher demonstrated an attitude of low expectations, this produced a negative Pygmalion effect (Kyriacou, 1997; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 2000) or negative self-fulfilling prophecy. This occurred when individuals internalized inaccurate expectations, which caused the inaccurate expectation to become a reality. Unfortunately, teachers often had misconceptions about urban children and, as a result, developed and adopted low expectations for them. Consistent exposure to low expectations led to the erosion of a student's self-confidence, motivation, and academic success (Good & Brophy, 1997). Additionally, low teacher expectations caused lower self-esteem, decreased academic motivation, and created racial mistrust and greater levels of anger

and depressive symptoms in students (Booker, 2006; Saunders, Davis, Williams & Williams, 2004; Sirota & Bailey, 2009; Wineburg, 1987).

In a study of teachers' expectations, researchers Diamond, Randolph, & Spillance (2004) found that in schools with a majority of African American students, teachers emphasized students' deficits, but in schools where most of the students were European and Asian, teachers honed in on the intellectual assets students brought to the classroom. In another study that examined perceptions of African American and European American teachers on the education of African American boys, the researchers described the African American teachers' perceptions of good teachers as caring about the students by being personally involved, by helping students, and by advising students about their education and societal barriers. On the other hand, European American teachers' perceptions of good teachers focused on teachers who had clear expectations and consequences, made the work interesting, and knew and taught the curriculum. They agreed that the strongest teachers were those who managed the classroom well and created a safe environment. European American teachers also all believed that in a safe environment, students had time to be motivated and energetic about their work, rather than involved in negative behavior. Additionally, both African American and European American teachers alike stated that good teachers were those who had the ability to teach the curriculum effectively. They praised teachers who "make the work interesting so that the kids actually want to do it" (p.168) and/or used collaborative projects so that the students worked together. Both African American and European American teachers stated that teachers must be able to break down academic tasks for students to understand the basic skills that support higher-level thinking. However, European American teachers placed their emphasis on clear expectations, consistent consequences, and a strong curriculum. In contrast, African American teachers focused on providing personal

support for academic success and engagement in the students' lives outside the classroom (Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007). The comments by the African American teachers mirrored the descriptions of culturally responsive teachers listed by Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1994).

### Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995) coined the term "culturally relevant pedagogy" (p.159) to describe teaching that rested on three primary propositions: (1) students must experience academic success, (2) students must develop and maintain their cultural competence, and (3) students must develop a critical consciousness to challenge the status quo. Gay (2000) found that when teachers used instructional processes that were consistent with the cultural orientations, experiences, and learning styles of marginalized African, Latino, Asian, and Native American students, they showed significant improvement in school. Gay also reported that it was important that all teachers, regardless of their ethnicity, learn and hold themselves accountable for culturally responsive teaching for diverse students. She explained that all teachers must be prepared to teach all students in our increasingly diverse world.

Hooks (1994) stated that teachers from grade school through college should view education as a practice of freedom. To create freedom from oppression linked to race, gender, and class, she identified what she called "an engaged pedagogy" (p. 20-21). Hooks believed in the value of students' experiences and felt that this should hold a significant place in the classroom. She believed that each student had experiences that he or she should share within the classroom. One should hear a student's stories and no teacher should deny student voice. Hooks stated that students must feel comfortable enough to be themselves in the classroom before they have the confidence to share their experience.



Freire (1970) contended that learners are political beings and knowledge creators. McLaren (1999), in discussing Freire's work, noted that learners were not passive, natural receivers of information or knowledge. Teachers made learning culturally and historically situated and embedded in differential relations of power. "As a result, students and teachers exist within a complex web of relationships where history, culture, race, class, gender, religion, and other identity markers and social constructs are woven together" (p.16). A culturally sensitive teacher understood this and moved children beyond tolerating differences to recognizing and embracing the strengths in diversity (Damico, 2003).

#### Curriculum and Instruction for African Americans

Wilson (1992) argued that the only curriculum capable of wholly preparing the African child for academic growth was an African-centered one. African-centered curricula writers based their teachings on African pedagogical strategies and approaches, used past and contemporary socio-historical and sociocultural experiences, built on the ideologies and perspectives of African peoples, acknowledged the developmental psychologies of African children and adolescents, and encouraged the development of a stable and enduring African identity and consciousness in Black students.

An African-centered curriculum helped the African child develop and maintain a positive self-image and pride through intensely studying African history and his/her place in that history. It commanded teachers to be culturally aware and hold high expectations for students, while acknowledging children's individuality and their ability to learn and succeed (Callender, 1992).

Shujaa (1994) argued that what a child learned is not as dependent on the curriculum as it is on the African-centeredness of the teacher who used African-centered thinking to pass on the cultural ideologies of the African race. Throughout his writings, he insisted that properly

taught African children, (using an African worldview) constantly re-interpreted and reconstructed what he taught using African cultural history as a base. This insistence led many to wonder whether African children, in search of Afrikanization, but living in a Eurocentric world, would ever experience the principles needed to cultivate their African mindset. Shujaa further explained that to avoid the under-development of the African American child, teachers needed to employ African-centered curricula and pedagogy to help liberate the minds of African children through African-centered teaching and learning.

An African-centered curriculum, as defined by the Woodlawn Community, was a curriculum that had a system of sequentially planned educational opportunities designed to provide African heritage children with the required skills that will enable them to participate in the global marketplace. It focused on specific interests and on uplifting and empowering them and their African-American communities, and on the total development and growth of the African continent. To be effective, there were several demands that an African-centered curriculum needed to meet. First, it had to address several constructs, for example, the valuable spiritual, intellectual, and physical knowledge and skills needed for the development of the African mind, the way in which people transmitted these knowledge and skills to assure mastery, and the specific social and personal objectives that drove the teaching and learning (Akoto, 1994). The African-centered pedagogy, he continued, was a “studied vigorous and creative elaboration of the fundamental precepts of African culture and ideology...not a simple negation of hegemonic assumptions of Eurocentric pedagogical theory, but it was also concerned with the acquisition of self-determination and self-sufficiency for African people.... with truth and the Afrocentric mission to humanize the universe” (p. 91).

Scholars Akoto (1994), Lee (1993; 1995), and Woodson (2008) argued that African American children desperately needed to develop a sense of worth, pride, and equity by engaging in study about concepts from an African perspective. They needed a way to tell their story, for the developmental function of education was to help a child develop individual autonomy, self-actualization, self-realization, and self-understanding (Stone, 1981). African children taught in Eurocentric ways were not able to do this. They needed to reach that level of consciousness through the study of a curriculum and through pedagogical styles that were like their African nature because children learned best when the content of the learning focused on things that were familiar and valuable to them. Mabhubuti (1994) found that African-centered cultural studies had the capacity to lead, encourage, and direct African American students into new technologies: computers, environmental sciences, finance, biochemistry, food technologies, bio-genetics, communications, electronics, et cetera. He argued that education must build a profound understanding of the racial, political, economic, scientific, and technological realities that challenged the African people and their survival.

Stone (1981) opposed that idea. He stated that although there were schools where teachers used authentic African-centered curricula, this was a concept that was still in the formative stages and many teachers were not trained or conscious enough to navigate through its implementation. Some others lamented that because there were more White teachers than Black teachers, it was difficult for them because they did not fully understand the African-centered curriculum, and even with good intentions, they superfluously produced wall displays and historical content of African people, but in a Eurocentric way (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2009).

Gordon (1994) proclaimed that an African-centered curriculum was effective when administrators recruited and trained culturally competent teachers. He found that the African-

centered curriculum fostered a strong African consciousness, as well as the skills needed to drive African American students into becoming productive citizens. Although this kind of curriculum fits African American children, the lack of appropriate teacher preparation and stereotypes and attitudes held by teachers about African American students made it very ineffective. Researchers Ladson-Billings (2001) and Gay (2000) both stated that a culturally relevant curriculum for African Americans was the first step toward making education equitable for African American students.

Recent research has pointed to the difficulty of enacting culturally relevant pedagogy. Young (2010) found in her study of the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in an urban school that teachers' cultural bias and the absence of race consciousness inhibited the implementation of culturally relevant practices. Additionally, Irvine-Jordan (2003) chided well-meaning educators who often assumed that culturally relevant pedagogy meant simply acknowledging ethnic holidays, including popular culture in the curriculum, or adopting colloquial speech, and predicted that attempting to implement culturally relevant teaching in this way could result in awkward classroom moments, ineffective instructional practices, and counterproductive teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships. Therefore, there is a need for experiences and curricula that mirror home life, community, and African-centered principles, such as, collectivity, engagement, sharing, and respect. These are often devoid in educational settings where non-blacks taught most African American students. Irvine-Jordan (1991) argued that a cultural mismatch, or a lack of cultural sync, occurred when African American children did not see themselves in the curriculum, and had frequent experiences in which their behavior was not honored or accepted (Garrison-Wade and Sampson, 2010).

The African American social and cultural experience, like those of each cultural group, is unique. African Americans were the only group forcibly brought to the Americas for the expressed purpose of labor exploitation through racial slavery. One of the most profound discoveries that culturally conscious Africans in America made during teaching is that agencies beyond their control determined the outcome of otherwise carefully planned and painfully executed teaching strategies. This position suggested very weighty implications for administrators, teachers, and students. It meant the failure of the education of the African child in American schools since educators used curricula developed for White students to educate African children. European curriculum makers planned or influenced these curricula to maintain the White cultural hegemony of the American nation (Akoto, 1992).

#### *Employing African Principles*

African-centered school models subscribe to the spiritual and cultural principles of the African people. They are situated in an African worldview which offers a “method of thought and practice rooted in the cultural image and human interests of African people” (Karenga, 1995, p.45). These essential principles of an African worldview are the prerequisites for the ideological cornerstone of an African-centered paradigm. Grills (2004) noted that to efficiently apply an African-centered paradigm one must “examine or analyze the phenomena with lens consistent with an African understanding of reality; African values; African logic; African methods of knowing; and African historical experiences” (p.173). Grills further noted that the African ideological premise is rooted in the concept Ma’at. According to the ancestors of ancient Kemet, Ma’at is the principle that governs human functioning and behavior (Nobles, 1990). The seven virtues of Ma’at are truth, justice, harmony, balance, order, reciprocity, and propriety. They are essentially the foundation of all experiences and engagements in an African-centered

school. To help children internalize their role and moral obligation, African-centered schools infuse Ma'at principles and the Nguzo Saba principles (more commonly known as principles of Kwanzaa) conceived by Marlane Karenga into their curriculum and school ethos. Nguzo Saba principles include: (a) Umoga or unity, (b) Kujichagulia or self-determination, (c) Ujima or collective work and responsibility, (d) Ujamaa or cooperative economics, (e) Kuumba or creativity, (f) Nia or purpose, and (g) Imani or faith (Kifano, 1996, p. 214). Children in African-centered schools are reminded daily of the importance of adhering to both of these sets of principles as they strive towards displaying honorable character and intellect.

To operate within an African-centered paradigm, individuals working in African-centered schools must provide instruction that complements the learning styles of Black children grounded in Ma'at and Nguzo Saba. For example, Ile Omode is an African-centered private school that is grounded in academic and African principles. The principles provide a foundation for the development of self-determination and leadership. At Ile Omode, the children are well versed in and have a fundamental understanding of the seven virtues of Ma'at, and they also understand how those seven virtues inform the conditions of *Maafa*, a Kiswahili term for terrible occurrence or great disaster, referenced here to describe the capture and enslavement of African people (Ani, 1994), which affects all African people due to the disharmony of *Ma'atin* values. Ani (1994) found in social science classes that the children were given reading assignments where they looked for the presence of one of the seven Ma'at and/or Kwanzaa principles in the selected text to call into play the students' historical and contemporary culturally ethnic experience which is a fundamental approach in Afrocentric models (Karenga, 2006).

From an early age, Black children are also exposed to high degrees of stimuli from the creative arts. They are recognized as being visual, auditory, kinesthetic and fashion-oriented

(Hale, 2001). In general, Black children are more kinesthetic and have higher levels of motor activity than White children. Researchers Ellison, Boykin, Towns, and Stokes (2000) noted that the average Black home environment is highly stimulating, as well as being intense and dynamic. Because Black children are exposure to such a stimulating and active environment, they have increased behavioral vibrancy and an affinity for stimulus intensity and change (Hale, 2001). These stimuli are often movement, expressiveness, dance, and rhythm. Additionally, Black children espouse an African ethos of communalism (Ellison et al., 2000). On the contrary, schools have been characterized as places that are not stimulating and dynamic and that assert the values of individualism and competition. Therefore, the schooling experiences of many Black students are not culturally sensitive or affirming (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perry, Steel, & Hilliard, 2003).

Furthermore, scholars and advocates of African-centered schooling suggest that school experiences for children should be congruent with their level of expression, activity, and learning styles (Azibo, 1996; Fu-kiau & Lukondo, 2000; Hilliard, 1992; Some', 1999). For example, most African American students thrive in environments that use multimedia and multimodal teaching strategies (Hale, 2001). As an example, teachers in one state took the state education standards and added the mathematical methods of Imhotep and other ancient African scholars to their instructional lessons. The purpose of designing such lessons was to situate concepts into a cultural paradigm that made children the subject, rather the object, of their schooling experiences. Contrary to that, mainstream cultural themes found in North American society and schools are often object orientated rather than student focused, low-energy, and less stimulating monolithic environments (Franklin, 1992), which are not congruent with the learning styles Black children. The majority of Black families exposed their children to high-energy, fast-paced

home environments where there are simultaneous variable stimulations (e.g., televisions and music playing simultaneously and people talking and moving in and about the home freely), and where the child is made the focus of attention, rather than the object. African-centered schools are structured to employ African principles and instructional practices that complement students' learning styles to nurture the holistic development of each child (Durden, 2007).

There were several rationales for teaching African using principles and content to raise their cultural awareness and develop them into well-rounded human beings. Carruthers outlined four of these (1995):

- To restore truth to the curriculum.
- To prove that Euro-centric education has proven ineffective in meeting the needs of African American students.
- To demonstrate that the gap that existed between the test scores of Black children and White children proved that Black students needed real education
- To show that a culturally appropriate education will decrease dropout rates.

Marks and Tonso (2006) supplemented these reasons with two more of their own. First, Blacks need African-centered education to rectify the number of African American children placed in special education and behavior disorder classes, which placed the students in an at-risk environment, and, second, children needed this curriculum to enable African students to realize their full potential and to challenge the stereotypical position of them as low achievers. However, to do this, the African-centered teacher must consider these ideas. He/she must ensure:

- the implementation of an African-centered curriculum in different settings.
- inclusion of a conceptualization of American society as a culturally diverse entity within which one uses ethnic solidarity to negotiate, acquire, and maintain power.



- promotion of intra-ethnic unity among Africans, while simultaneously providing strategies for working well with other groups with similar needs and interests.
- that African children do not have double consciousness. This is a term coined by Dubois as a way of looking at one's self through someone else's eyes; and
- the availability of the tools that students will need to navigate this proposed form of learning (Akoto, 1992; Dubois, 1903; Fenderson, 2008; Shujaa, 1994).

#### Practices and Environments that Foster Success

Researcher Boykin (1994) suggested that African American students learned best in an environment that was relational and personal, like an extended family. In another study, researchers Love & Kruger (2005) indicated that successful teachers of African American children (a) drew on African culture and history, (b) promoted the location of self in an historical and cultural context, (c) helped students create new knowledge based on life experience, and (d) treated knowledge as reciprocal. Those successful teachers also created a community of learners, much like an extended family, who perceived teaching as a part of their calling and had high expectations for the success of all students.

Willis (1992) observed a public elementary school that successfully served primarily African American students and found that faculty and staff had created a climate in which each person was responsible not only for one's self, but also for others. Teachers believed that students' race and culture were essential elements to teach them effectively. In addition, those teachers perceived race and family as indistinguishable. He also concluded that beliefs governing attitudes and expectations created school climate, like positive relationships in an extended family. School climates where teachers understood how to foster extended family relations, displayed a positive attitude toward their students, and had high expectations, caused a

paradigm shift in education for African American students. Consequently, African American children overcame obstacles and barriers that kept them oppressed (Love & Kruger, 2005).

Yet, with a vast amount of information on ways to foster such an environment, as well as knowledge of practices that promoted success for African Americans, the achievement gap was still steadily increasing. This communicated one or both of two consequences: (1) not much prevented the demise of African American students, or (2) solutions did not bring about permanent and/or positive changes. Based upon this content, it appeared that the designers of the schooling system in America planned to produce students who will uphold the truths of the European-American elites and their dominant culture (Shujaa, 1994).

#### *Influential Impact of Teachers*

Webster (2015) defined influence as having an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something. Teachers influenced students in many different areas of students' lives, not only academically, but socially as well. Winograd and others (1990) explored what they saw as an abundance of data to help explain the roles many teachers had that made them influential in children's overall development. They found that when teachers and students formed healthy relationships, students experienced high academic success. Kesner (2005) reported that educators' perceptions of gifted students exerted tremendous influence on gifted children's academic and social/emotional development. Of the factors associated with a successful classroom experience for gifted children, Kensner concluded that classroom teachers played a vital role in both academic and social success.

As well, school leadership influences school culture. Cherkowski (2012) found that principals who displayed compassion influenced their teachers to commit more fully to their craft. In Cherkowski's investigation of how leaders nourished and sustained such passion, he

determined that a leader who was emotionally committed to teachers fostered and sustained powerful learning communities. Additionally, Fullerton (2008) suggested that the passion a teacher brought to teaching influenced student engagement. Fullerton connected factors that affected motivation and passion to focus on how teacher leaders nourished and sustained relationships. His research helped explain teacher roles that crucially influenced a child's overall development.

### Social Justice and Constructivist Theory

Kelly (2012) claimed that a concern for social justice in education raised questions about the ways schooling has systematically failed to serve many students from diverse backgrounds. The researcher also examined the idea of who got how much schooling. A focus on social and historical context revealed multiple inequalities, which influenced access to, treatment in, and outcomes of schooling. She said that educators and citizens should care about the effects of persistent poverty, cultural imperialism, racism- and the list goes on. Teachers alone, of course, cannot solve these injustices and inequities, although teaching is both a moral and a political enterprise, but the daily actions and interactions, attitudes, and beliefs teachers held mattered in the effort to build a more just, caring, and democratic society. She claimed that preparing and supporting teachers to engage in culturally sensitive education, therefore, was of the utmost importance.

Damico (2003) studied one classroom of 28 fifth grade students and their first-year teacher who committed to social justice issues. The students read and responded to a set of texts during a literature based language arts unit focusing on freedom and slavery issues. Findings from the data analysis of this study pointed to four framing concepts that the teacher utilized to help students engage with and deepen their understanding of socially complex issues, such as,

slavery, freedom, and social justice. In her findings, Damico pointed to the importance of a teacher (a) building community, (b) making and deepening connections with students regarding the past and present (e.g., slavery and current racial profiling) and between the text and personal experiences, (c) cultivating critical perspectives (questioning the author and examining students' roles as readers), and (d) acting with compassion by taking on some form of social justice action.

Krafchick (2007) wrote an ethnographic study on developmental considerations important for teaching social justice in northern Colorado. It focused on the needs of teachers who incorporated a social justice curriculum into their educational settings in developmentally responsive ways. There were 100 educators who participated in 1-day conferences on integrating a social justice curriculum entitled "FAIR: Fairness for All Individualized through Respect" into their curriculum. The findings, based on teacher perceptions, suggested that students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were ideally ready to learn about social justice issues. Teachers also believed that the academic structure of elementary school was better able to accommodate the integration of social justice content than the junior high or high school levels. Overall, the educators felt that the FAIR curriculum was beneficial and effective for helping students learn about social justice issues. However, researchers did not assess the learning outcomes for students in this study.

In analyzing the above research studies, this investigator found that the studies focused on the characteristics of social justice teaching and its impact on students. Additionally, the researchers also documented observed practices. However, what was not evident in the research literature was the impact of teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive teaching. While studies indicated that students learned about social injustice when culturally sensitive teachers

taught about it, not gleaned from the literature were the attitudes and perceptions that teachers held toward this method of teaching and learning. Thus, there is need for research in this area.

### Constructivist Theory

Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning derived from one's ability to construct one's own ideas and ways of learning.

"It is assumed that learners have to construct their own knowledge-- individually and collectively. Each learner has a tool kit of concepts and skills with which he or she must construct knowledge to solve problems presented by the environment. The role of the community-- other learners and teacher-- is to provide the setting, pose the challenges, and offer the support that will encourage mathematical {and other} construction" (Davis, Maher, & Noddings, 1990, p. 3).

It is extremely critical for African Americans to construct their own story. CRT stated that African Americans needed to recount narratives to tell their story, while dismantling the stories of the dominant cultural. Richards, Brown, & Forde (2004) found that African American students who constructed their own story had teachers who displayed the following characteristics:

1. Teachers understood that race, ethnicity, social class, and language influenced their way of thinking and behaving. They also critically examined their own sociocultural identities and the inequalities between schools and society that supported institutional discrimination geared toward a privileged society based on social class and skin color. Teachers also inspected and confronted any negative attitudes they might have towards cultural groups.

2. Teachers had an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds that impacted student learning, their belief in self, and their overall academic performance. They also respected cultural differences and added education to the student's culture.
3. Teachers displayed a commitment to social justice, acting as agents of change. They raised awareness and confronted barriers/obstacles that hindered change and developed skills for collaboration. Teachers assisted schools in becoming more equitable over time, while embracing cultural differences.
4. Teachers had constructivist views of learning and contended that all students can learn. They also provided scaffolds between what students already know from experience and what they need to learn. They modeled teaching that promoted critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and the recognition of multiple perspectives.
5. Teachers learned about students' past experiences, home and community culture, and the world both in and outside of school, which helped build relationships and increased students' prospects. As well, the teacher used these experiences in the context of teaching and learning.
6. Teachers utilized culturally responsive teaching strategies to support the constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning. Teachers assisted students to construct knowledge, build on the students' personal and cultural strengths, and examined the curriculum from multiple perspectives, to create an inclusive classroom environment.
7. Teachers effectively ran a multi-racial classroom by showing appreciation of diversity. This entailed developing respect for differences and a willingness to teach from this perspective.

8. Teachers participated in reforming the educational system so that it became inclusive.

Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Klein (1995) stated:

“If all children are to be effectively taught, teachers must be prepared to address the substantial diversity and experiences children bring with them to school-the wide range of languages, cultures, exceptionalities, learning styles, talents, and intelligences that in turn requires an equally rich and varied repertoire of teaching strategies. In addition, teaching for universal learning demands a highly developed ability to discover what children know and can do, as well as how they think and how they learn, and to match learning and performance opportunities to the needs of the individual children” (p.2).

#### Summary

This study is necessary to gather current data on teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive teaching. Effectively, to address this critical issue, researchers need current data, as the existing literature is mostly old or very old. Schools and colleges have made some effort to address tolerance and respect for all with the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) (2010) which requires teachers and other school personal to have six hours of training covering topics, such as, bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, and discrimination in schools. However, DASA does not address deeper ingrained issues that Black students face in schools, nor does it address teachers' attitudes and perceptions about teaching African American students. Furthermore, the literature has not examined teachers' attitudes towards culturally sensitive constructivist teaching, nor has the literature looked at teaching grounded in social justice principles to teach African Americans, to better understand factors that may or may not contribute to the underachievement of Black students, and as a way of narrowing the achievement gap for Black Americans.

Therefore, it is essential to complete this study to discover teachers' attitudes towards culturally sensitive teaching and learning for African American students. Teachers are an important factor in student achievement; therefore, the researcher hopes that better understanding teachers' attitudes and beliefs about culturally sensitive teaching will one day help close the achievement gap. Furthermore, this study will identify factors that promote or hinder culturally sensitive teaching for Black students.

Chapter Two examined some of the existing literature on teachers' beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, values, and expectations about culture and how students learn. According to the literature, teachers should personalize teacher-student interactions, and be responsive to students' needs. In the next chapter, the investigator will propose a means to answer the research questions guiding this study. Furthermore, she will discuss method, participants, setting, procedures for data collection, and data analysis.



### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

*“If we start with the prison statistics, looking at them as symptoms of a larger problem, and work backward, a causative pattern emerges. This pattern, in turn, helps us to diagnose the malignancy known as The Achievement Gap, and enables us to prescribe a cure” (Gibson, 2007).*

This researcher designed this study to help shed light on the persistent failure of African American students, and ethnic students at large, by examining teachers' attitudes about culturally sensitive teaching. This chapter describes the setting and the selection of participants, and addresses procedures for data collection and analysis. The chapter also indicates how the researcher used the resultant information to explore the research questions (Mauch & Birch, 1998).

As the researcher discussed in Chapter I, the focus of this study is to investigate teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about culturally sensitive constructivist teaching, grounded in social justice principles, for African American students. The researcher derived the foundation of this study from a multi-dimensional theoretical framework, focusing on the foundations of culturally relevant pedagogy as described by Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1995), and supported by the tenets of critical race theorists (Asante, 1992; Bell, 1988; Delgado, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006;) and racial identity development (Ogbu, 1991; Sheets & Hollins, 1999; Tatum, 1997). Therefore, the study explored factors that fostered and/or inhibited the development of culturally sensitive teachers.

Moreover, this section of the dissertation explains the methodology the researcher used to answer the research questions, followed by a comprehensive description of the survey

instrument, and the method of data analysis. Lastly, the chapter discusses ethical considerations and methodological limitations.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of elementary and middle school teachers about culturally sensitive teaching and learning, specifically for African American students. The study was an exploratory one focused on uncovering the factors that reveal variability of teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Teachers completed a survey instrument, which quantified their beliefs across four different domains: planning and preparation, race and ethnicity, knowledge of African American students, and curriculum and instruction, as they relate to teaching Black children. To that extent, this chapter discusses the attitudes and beliefs that teachers' noted, and it identifies the variables the researcher used to determine if there were any correlations between teacher demographics and identified teacher attitudes. The chapter also discusses how identifying correlations (if any) provide insight into the attitudes and beliefs of the respondents. Finally, this study explains how the researcher measured the themes within the survey, including the design of the questionnaire and the rationale for using an online instrument. The chapter ends with an analysis that addressed the research questions.

### Research Questions

To understand the attitudes and perceptions elementary and middle school teachers have that may contribute to the underachievement of African American students, the following specific research questions (RQ) guided this study:

*RQ1:* How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students?

*RQ2:* Do race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold about African American students?

*RQ3:* How cognizant are teachers of issues that affect African American students?

*RQ4:* Are teachers addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction?

### Research Design

This researcher designed an exploratory study whose purpose was to investigate teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about culturally sensitive teaching and learning for Black students. It is imperative that we understand teachers' attitudes and beliefs about ethnicity and race as they pertain to teaching, as individuals' beliefs have a powerful impact on practice (Winograd & Others, 1990). The researcher grounded the study in racial and ethnic dimensions of social justice and constructivist teaching, and focused on discovering attitudes teachers held. The researcher employed a survey as the principal element of the research design. A description of the creation and implementation of this survey instrument is below.

### Development of Survey Instrument

This section details the creation and implementation of the instrument used in this study. In reviewing surveys utilized in previous research studies to measure teachers' attitudes toward teaching and learning for African Americans, no single survey emerged that adequately measured teacher' attitude, specifically toward culturally sensitive teaching for African American students. For example, the researcher analyzed the findings from Love's (2001) and Ladson-Billings' (1994b) surveys. Their instruments focused on relevant teaching practices and teachers' influence on student achievement outcomes, but not on teachers' attitudes. The researcher also examined Love and Kruger's (2005) survey that measured teachers' beliefs

regarding culturally relevant practices in classrooms serving African American students, but not teachers' cultural sensitivity. There were many other published survey instruments that measured factors that contribute to the underachievement of minority students, but these surveys did not necessarily focus on teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive teaching.

Additionally, many research designs used case studies and interviews, not surveys. Lastly, only a limited number of studies focused on elementary and middle school teachers' experiences of culturally relevant teaching for Black students as its primary research purpose. Several other studies talked about different aspects of work in education, but not teachers' attitudes.

Due to the limited availability of appropriate survey instruments for this study, the research constructed a survey to investigate teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive teaching and learning for African American students. Therefore, the researcher developed a survey that consisted of 50 statements that reflected culturally sensitive beliefs and practices. The researcher developed the survey instrument based upon examination of research literature, expert advice, and the researcher's own ideas and experiences. The researcher examined pertinent issues in the research literature related to culturally sensitive teaching and learning for African Americans, such as, curriculum and instruction, race and ethnicity, planning and preparation, and knowledge of students, and used them to develop most of the survey statements. Below the researcher included a table that displays the source for each statement on the survey.

Table 3.1 - Survey Items by Themes with Sources

Survey items by theme	Source or inspiration
<i>Theme #1 Planning and Preparation</i>	
1. Teacher preparation programs should focus on culturally relevant teaching.	Akoto, 1994; Banks & Banks, 2004; Bell, 1998; Good & Brophy, 1997

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. I consider my students' culture when planning lessons.   | Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Carruthers, 1995; Cochran-Smith, Davis & Morrison, 2000   |
| 3. When preparing my classroom, I think about my students and how I can create an environment that fosters learning for all students. | Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond, Hudson, & Kirby, 1989  |
| 4. I use materials that represent various perspectives.   | Cummins, 1984; Damico, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Marks & Tonso, 2006.   |
| 5. I spend time learning about my students' community.  | Mehan et al., 1996.  |
| 6. The school district I work in has offered sufficient opportunities to participate in sensitivity training on cultural differences. | Author.  |
| 8. I am equipped to teach students from diverse backgrounds.  | Akoto, 1992; Carruthers, 1995; Nobles, 1990.   |
| 9. College courses failed to prepare me to teach ethnic students.   | Asante, 1992 & 1994; Banks, 2006; Banks & Banks, 2004; Douglas et al., 2008; Jencks, & Phillips, 1998; Villegas & Lucas, 2002. |
| 10. I prepare assessments that mirror my students' learning styles.   | Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1995.  |
| 11. I plan activities that empower African American students.   | Ladson-Billings, 1997; Tucker & Herman, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Gay, 2000.   |
| 49. I believe teaching social justice principles increases achievement for African American students.                                 | Akoto, 1994; Asante, 1992; Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; CIBI, 1994.   |

*Theme #2 Race and Ethnicity*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 12. I plan lessons that celebrate African American students in a positive way. | Kyriacou, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Love & Kruger, 2005; Tucker & |
|--|--|

- Herman, 2002; Woodson, 2008; Willis, 1992.
13. Test biases are responsible for the racial achievement gap. Ellison, Boykin, & Stokes, 2000; Terrell, & Mark, 2000.
14. Ethnicity and culture are only celebrated at my school during major holidays. Ellison, Boykin, & Stokes, 2000; Terrell, & Mark, 2000.
15. Closing the achievement gap is very important. Donnor, & Shockley, 2010; Ikpa, 2004; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001.
16. I am aware of biases and stereotypes I have about students. Ferguson, 2003; Franklin, 1992; Irvine-Jordan, 1991; Matsuda, 1987.
17. Race and ethnicity have little or nothing to do with student achievement. Irvine-Jordan, 2003; Marks & Tonso, 2006.
18. White children are better behaved than Black children. Irvine-Jordan, 2003; Marks & Tonso, 2006.
19. Racism is a major problem in education. Fuller, 1992; Gibson, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2001(a) (b) (c).
20. Suspension and retention are major issues for African American students. Irvine-Jordan, 2003; Marks & Tonso, 2006.
21. Students should be taught about racial justice. Juarez, 2010; Kelly, 2012.
22. High quality education is an issue in most African American communities. Gordon, 2000.
23. Racism in any manner lowers a child's self-esteem. Irvine-Jordan, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001.
44. The curriculum I use represents diverse perspectives. Mabhubuti, 1994.
46. Teachers are required to make accommodations for students from diverse backgrounds. Mabhubuti, 1994.
47. I often feel overwhelmed and unequipped to implement a Gay, 2000.

culturally relevant curriculum.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 48. Teaching an African-centered curriculum excludes other groups of students. | Gay, 2000.   |
| 50. African American students should be taught using African-principles        | Akoto, 1994; Asante, 1992; Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; CIBI, 1994. |

*Theme #3 Knowledge of African American Students*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 24. Attitudes and prejudices about groups of students impact the way I view and teach them.                                | Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994. |
| 25. I have entertained thoughts of “implied racism” that I am aware of when working with African American students.        | Smith, 2017.   |
| 26. I believe that African American students are inferior to White students.   | Irvine-Jordan, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001.                |
| 27. I have had (past or present) negative experiences with African American students that affected how I have treated them | Smith 2017.  |
| 28. Most African American students are self-motivated to learn.  | Stone, 1981.   |
| 29. I feel that most African American students do not value their education.   | Rosenthal & Jacobson, 2000.                                |
| 30. I often have to discipline African American students more than any other group of students.                            | Rastogi et al., 2011.                                      |
| 31. African American students are likely to be labeled “gifted”.   | Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 2000.    |
| 32. Most African American boys are hostile and aggressive.   | Brownell & Pajares, 1999; Porter, 1997.                    |
| 33. Society often makes excuses for African American students' failures.   | Porter, 1997.  |
| 34. Most African American parents value their child's education.   | Banks, 2006; Garrison-Wade & Sampson, 2010.                |
| 45. A curriculum should focus on the skills students need to know,   | Willis, 1992.  |

and not students' culture.

*Theme #4 Curriculum & Instruction*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 35. Most African American students do not feel accepted at school.  | Akoto, 1994; Bacon, Banks, Young, & Jackson, 2007.    |
| 36. I look for opportunities to learn about my students' culture.   | Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1995.                 |
| 38. I understand the issues that African American students face.  | Gay, 2000; Kyriacu, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994.      |
| 39. African American children are more interested in rap music than academics.  | Banks, 2006; Garrison-Wade & Sampson, 2010.           |
| 40. Schools with an ethnic population need a diverse faculty.   | Ladson-Billings, 2001; Richards, Brown & Forde, 2004. |
| 41. If African American students are not learning, I attribute that to their lack of motivation to learn.                                 | Richards, Brown & Forde, 2004.                        |
| 42. My experiences with trying to get African American parents involved in their children's educational experience has been unsuccessful. | Banks, 2006; Banks & Banks, 2004; Franklin, 1992.     |
| 43. When I'm teaching I don't see my students' race, I just teach.  | Sirota & Bailey, 2009.                                |

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*Note.* Literature and experts in the field inspired the survey items. The statement that I credited to the author is based on personal communications and on formal and informal discussions on teaching and learning about African American children. The statements reflect each theme.

Sapsford (1994), explained that attitudes and perceptions “form a whole constellation of working rules about the world and reactions to it” (p. 141). Sapsford argued that one should approach the study of attitudes through questionnaire research that is indirect questioning of respondents' opinions, attitudes, and perceptions, as he emphasized that straightforward questions easily evoked ideological responses, and this was often not what the research required. In consideration of the complexities of attitudinal research, the researcher utilized a survey



comprised primarily of statements aimed indirectly at probing respondents' attitudes and perceptions about culturally sensitive teaching for African American students.

The researcher developed The *Teacher Attitudes Towards Culturally Sensitive Teaching for African Americans* survey (Appendix D). The first section consists of demographic information. The second section consists of 50 items (listed above) where the participants indicated agreement or disagreement based upon a Likert-type scale. The researcher chose a Likert style questionnaire for this study due to its reported efficiency and reliability. A Likert scale is a rating scale measuring the strength of agreement towards a set of clear statements. A researcher administers this type of scale in the form of a questionnaire to gauge attitudes or reactions (Clasen & Dormody, 1994; Jacoby, Jacob, & Matell, 1971; Likert, 1932). The efficiency of a Likert style questionnaire "comes from being easy to use, score, and enter data. Also, the reliability is enhanced because of the uniform data they provide; everyone responds in terms of the same options" (Fink, 2006, p.14).

Following Fink's most recommended choice (2006), the researcher chose the survey values: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree, and (4) strongly disagree. The researcher chose a four point Likert scale to force respondents to select either positive or negative choices. There was no option to allow them to choose "no choice" or "undecided". The researcher instructed the respondents to read statements and check the box that most closely represented their opinion. However, before the researcher disseminated the survey instrument to teachers the researcher tested the validity and reliability of the instrument.

#### Validity and Reliability of Survey

##### *Validity*

Validity refers to the degree to which a test or other measuring device is truly measuring what the research intended to measure (Retrieved on 5/22/17 from <https://allpsych.com/researchmethods/validityreliability/>). Validity consists of two parts, internal and external validity. External validity cannot exist without internal validity. Internal validity encompasses whether the results of the study are legitimate because of the way the researcher selected the groups, recorded the data, or performed the analysis. External validity, often called “generalizability”, involves whether the results given by the study are transferable to other groups (i.e. populations) of interest (Retrieved on 5/22/17 from <http://www.natcol.org/Professional-Development/files/Research%20Guidelines/Validity-Reliability%20Research%20Article.pdf>).

Creswell (2007) explained that a lack of internal validity results in “experimental procedures, participants’ treatments or experiences that threaten the researcher’s ability to draw correct inferences from the data in an experiment” (p. 171). Some threats to internal validity may include participant credibility, participant mortality, and instrumentation relating to the survey questions. Creswell (2007) defined a lack of external validity as “threats that arise when experimenters draw incorrect inferences from the sample data to other persons, other settings, and past or future situations” (p. 171). Some threats to external validity may include transferability of the findings and applicability of the findings due to small sample size (Creswell, 2007 & 2009).

There are several ways to estimate the validity of a test, including content validity, concurrent validity, face validity, construct validity, and predictive validity. The researcher decided that this survey instrument and each of the four research questions have content validity because she based them on the literature review, and a panel of experts (the dissertation

committee) reviewed them. Content validity is a non-statistical type of validity that involves “the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of the behavior domain to be measured” (Anatasi & Urbina, 1997, p. 114). A survey has content validity built into it by careful selection of which items to include (Anatasi & Urbina, 1997). The researcher chose items so that they complied with the survey specification, which the researcher developed through a thorough examination of the subject domain. Foxcraft et al (2004) noted that using a panel of experts to review the survey specifications and the selection of items proves the content validity of the survey. The experts reviewed the items and commented on whether the items covered a representative sample of the behavior domain (Retrieved on 5/22/17 from <https://www2.mcdaniel.edu/rtrader/handouts/Statistics/spss.pdf>).

To ensure the validity of the survey instrument's content, the researcher sent the survey to her committee members and chairperson in the education department of Long Island University Post and to an independent statistician for review. Later, the researcher revised the survey based on their input. The researcher chose these committee members to review the survey instrument due to their specializations in the areas of teaching and learning, equity education, and social emotional issues that Black students face. After the panel's thorough analysis of the instrument, they supported the content validity of the survey instrument. .

### *Reliability*

The researcher tested the reliability of the 50 statements using Cronbach's alpha. When there are multiple Likert questions in a survey/questionnaire that form a scale and reliability needs to be determined, researchers commonly use Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency (“reliability”). Reliability is concerned with the ability of an instrument to measure consistently. Cronbach's alpha is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. If the items in a

survey correlate to each other, the value of alpha is increased. However, a high coefficient alpha does not always mean a high degree of internal consistency because the length of the survey also affects alpha. If a survey is too short, the value of alpha reduces. To increase alpha, one adds more related items assessing the same concept. Although a higher alpha value is ideal for internal reliability, a low value of alpha could be due to a low number of questions or to poor inter-relatedness between items (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The researcher determined the reliability of this survey using Cronbach's alpha. Trochim (2006), found that Cronbach's alpha on the average correlation for all possible variable pairs. Although the possible range of values is .00 to 1.00, for exploratory purposes .60 is acceptable. For confirmatory purposes .70 is acceptable and .80 is considered good, which suggests internal consistency without redundancy (Crane, Holm, Hobson, Cooper, Reed & Stadelmeier, 2005). It reflects the correlation among all items in a particular measurement instrument. The Cronbach's alpha for this survey instrument is .620 (*see Table 3.2*).

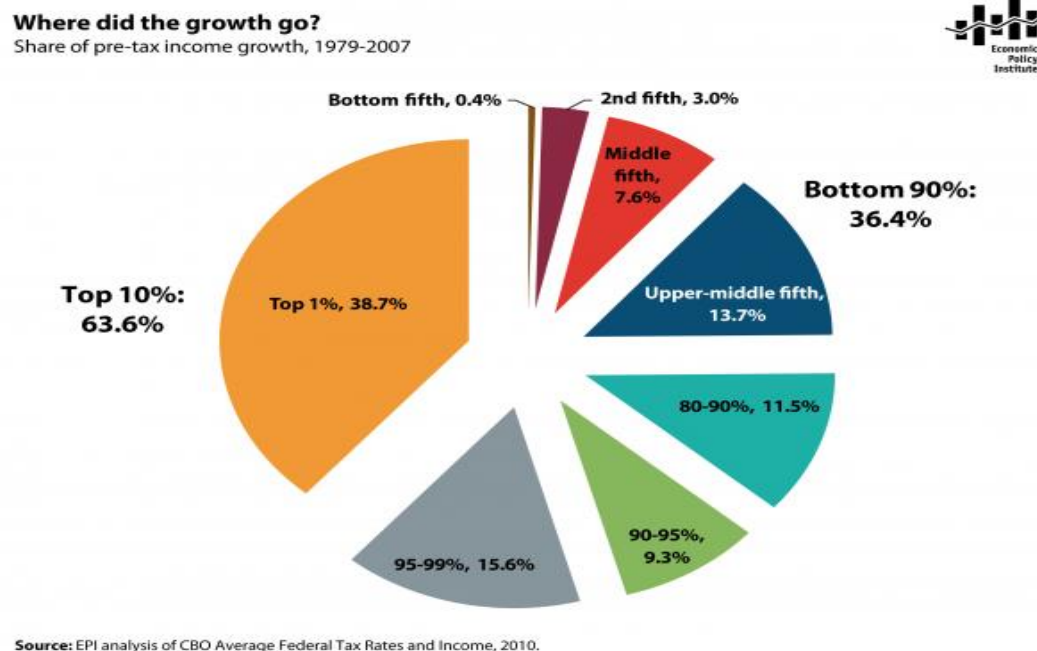
*Table 3.2. Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.620	.621	50

With a Cronbach's alpha falling midway between 0 and 1, the researcher found the instrument for this study not decisively reliable nor not reliable, but the researcher determined it usable because the Cronbach's alpha results were slightly above .60, the acceptable score for exploratory studies (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Thus, the researcher deemed the survey instrument used in this study reliable and valid for the data that she collected and analyzed.

#### Brief Description of School District Setting and Participants

This study took place in the New York City Public Schools. The New York City Department of Education (DOE) is the largest school district in the US, serving 1.1 million students in over 1,800 schools in thirty-four districts. The New York City Public Schools possess significant inequalities of opportunity across racial and economic lines, for New York City is the most economically segregated area in the United States, with heavily overlapping, poor, segregated communities (Fry & Taylor, 2012). Segregation contributes significantly to New York City's racial inequalities and isolates some communities from critical life opportunities. Moreover, these inequalities are part of a larger issue of structural and institutional practices that privilege some communities and isolate others. Figure 3.2 below displays the disparities in income according to households in NYC during the years 1979-2007. Sixty-three and a third percent of the wealth went to the top 10% of the individuals in the wealthiest communities, and 36.4% of the wealth went to the bottom 90% of the people, who live in poor communities. The school districts in this study have major, persistent gaps in achievement and performance based on race, ethnicity, language, and disability, and reflect the demographics of 90% of families who live in poor communities (epi.org).



*Figure 3.1.* Displayed income inequalities in New York City. The top 10% of the rich people in NYC received 63.3% of the wealth, and the bottom 10%, the poorest people, received 36.4% of the city's income.

The population for this research study included approximately 80 teachers from four schools in two school districts in an urban area. Accurately to represent the population, a sample size of 66 teachers was necessary. The researcher determined the sample size of 66 by using the sample size calculator found at <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm#one> for 5% error and a 95% confidence level.

The researcher selected the participants in this research via convenience and purposive sampling. The teachers who participated in this study are from two elementary and two middle schools in an urban area, where the ethnicities of the students and the geographical locations are similar to each other. The major reason the researcher selected these sites was close proximity

(convenience sampling), and it allowed the researcher to gather data from elementary and middle school teachers who taught Black students (purposive sampling) (Babbie, 1990; Fink, 1995b). As the purpose of this study was to describe the attitudes and perceptions teachers held toward African American students, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to purposefully choose school sites with the likelihood that the attitudes and/or viewpoints under investigation were present and researchable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Lastly, not only did these schools have a majority of Black students, but also, were low performing, making the selected schools suitable for the study.

### Ethical Considerations

Researchers Bogden and Biklen (1998) stated that “two issues dominate traditional official guidelines of ethics in research with human subjects: informed consent and the protection of subject from harm” (p. 43). The researcher used pseudonyms for all places and subjects to ensure that no one will ever know the subjects’ identities or locations. Participants did not sign their names on the consent form to assure anonymity.

Prior to data collection, a number of offices granted permission. On March 16, 2017, the researcher received permission to conduct the study from the NYC Department of Education Review Board. On March 20, 2017, the researcher received permission to conduct the research from the IRB office at Long Island University Post. After, the researcher received permission from both Community District Superintendents. Lastly, the researcher obtained permission on March 27, 2017, from each principal to distribute the questionnaires to their teachers.

The researcher attached a one-page cover letter to the front of the questionnaire (Appendix A). The cover letter introduced the researcher and the research study. It also explained the purpose of the study and the procedures. The researcher notified the respondents

of anticipated benefits and of the consequences of participating in this research study.

Additionally, the researcher informed the participants that the study would take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Furthermore, the researcher embedded an informed consent statement within the letter explaining that the participants' completion of the survey constituted their informed consent. Participants did not, at any time, sign their name or provide any information that identified them. The letter also included the researcher's contact information. The researcher told the participants to keep the cover letter for their records.

The researcher solicited participants by way of personal invitation. The researcher visited selected schools and provided an oral and written explanation of the purpose of the study, answered any questions pertaining to the study, and solicited volunteer teachers.

#### Data Collection and Online Survey

The researcher collected data by visiting sites during faculty meetings where she conducted information sessions. During that time, the researcher informed teachers of their options for completing the survey: option #1, online survey, and option # 2, paper version. The researcher generated physical letters to invite teachers to participate in the voluntary online or paper survey. The letter explained that each participant would remain completely anonymous and that no risk would occur during this study. The researcher gave a link to the online survey and distributed physical copies of the survey for completion during the faculty meeting if the participants so desired. However, each participant opted to complete his or her survey online via survey monkey. The researcher encouraged participants to review their survey to ensure that they rated each statement to the best of their ability.

#### *Data Entry, Scoring, and Screening*



One of the first and most important steps in any data processing task is to verify that data values are correct or, at the very least, that they conform to a set of rules. After the researcher collected the surveys, she then exported them to Microsoft excel for data cleansing, a process where the researcher amended incorrect and incomplete data and reformatted data for further processing in SPSS. For example, the researcher converted the nominal data (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) to scale data with values from 1 to 4 (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree). The researcher then transformed the 50 statements into variables for each research question. The researcher renamed each statement to identify to which research question the statement belonged. For example, statement 1 became RQ1.1 The researcher then imported the data into SPSS. In the Variable View pane, she label the values. She set missing values to 999 and checked each measure or changed it to scale. The researcher then completed descriptive statistics, which included collecting, organizing, summarizing, and presenting descriptive data.

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

Following the completion and collection of the survey, the researcher analyzed the data and reported the findings. The *Teacher Attitudes Towards Culturally Sensitive Teaching for African Americans* survey contained two sections. Section A captured teachers' (respondents) demographic data and Section B captured teachers' beliefs about and perceptions of cultural sensitivity when teaching African American students. This study utilized both nominal and ordinal scales of measurement. Section A was nominal scales (labels) of measure, while section B was ordinal scales of measure. To analyze comprehensively the data for this survey, the researcher completed a combination of analyses of variance (tests). The researcher used SPSS standard descriptive statistics (central tendency) to determine mean, median, and mode for both

sections of the survey. Some experts argued that statisticians should use the median as the measure of central tendency for Likert scale data. Similarly, other experts contended that statisticians should use frequencies (percentages of responses in each category), for analysis instead of parametric tests (Artino and Sullivan, 2013). The researcher completed frequency statistics for RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4,

In SPSS, the researcher ran frequencies for each of the demographic variables from section A of the survey. The researcher did not run the variables in section B for frequencies until she transformed the variables into a new variable for each statement that aligned with its specific research question as follows:

First, the researcher selected statements. The criteria for selecting the statements was that the statements had to address specifically the overarching theme of the research question. For example, the researcher chose eleven statements to address RQ 1: *How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students?* The researcher chose the statements because they directly addressed teacher preparedness. An example of one of the statements selected for RQ1 was: When preparing my classroom, I think about my students and how I can create an environment that fosters learning for all students. Second, the researcher summed the number of responses for each statement and generated percentages. Lastly, the percentages were the results. The researcher repeated this process for each research question (*see Table 3.3-.3.6*).

1. The researcher explored Research Question 1: *How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students* using survey statements 1 – 6, 8 – 11, and 49. She selected these 11 statements to explore RQ1 because they directly addressed teachers' preparedness. She summed the 85 responses for each of those 11 statements and generated percentages by dividing the total number of responses for each category on the Likert scale by the 11 statements that comprised RQ1. She then used the percentages to understand whether teachers perceived themselves to be prepared to teach African American students. *Table 3.3. Descriptive Statistics for RQ1: How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students?*

[illegible]

2. Research question 2: *Do race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold about African American students?* The researcher explored this research question using survey statements 12 – 23, 44, 46 – 48, and 50. She selected these 17 statements to address RQ2 because they focus mainly on the role of race and ethnicity, and their impact on teachers' attitudes. The researcher transformed the statements into RQ2 by summing the survey results for the 17 statements. She generated percentages by dividing the total number of responses for each category on the Likert scale by the 17 statements that comprised RQ2 for each of the four points on the Likert Scale. She used the percentages to understand whether race and ethnicity played a role in the attitudes teachers hold about teaching African American students.

*Table 3.4. Descriptive Statistics for RQ2: Do race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold for African American students?*

[illegible]

3. Research question 3: *How cognizant are teachers of issues that affect African American students?* As with RQ1 and RQ2, the researcher selected 12 statements to explore RQ3. She chose statements 24 – 34 and 45 to address RQ 3 because they closely aligned to teachers' awareness of the issues that affect African American students. The researcher transformed these statements into RQ3 by summing the survey results and generating percentages by dividing the total number of responses for each category on the Likert scale by the number of statements (12) that comprised RQ3 for each of the four points on the Likert Scale. She then used the percentages to understand how cognizant teachers are of issues that affect African American students.

*Table 3.5. Descriptive Statistics for RQ3: How cognizant are teachers of issues that affect African American students?*

[illegible]



4. The researcher explored Research Question 4: *Are teachers addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction* using survey statements 35 - 36 and 38 - 43. She selected these eight statements to explore RQ4 because those statements directly addressed whether teachers addressed the needs of Black students with their curriculum and instruction. The researcher summed the responses for each of the eight statements, and generated percentages (as in RQ1, 2 and 3) by dividing the total number of responses for each category on the Likert scale by the eight statements that comprised RQ4. Finally, the researcher used the percentages to determine whether teachers addressed the needs of Black students with their curriculum and instruction.

*Table 3.6. Descriptive Statistics for RQ4: Are teachers addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction?*

[illegible]

*Pearson Chi-Square Tests*

Next, the researcher used the chi-square technique to analyze Section B of the survey instrument (the Likert Scale). The researcher performed statistical analyses to explore theories that the researcher held about teachers' attitudes about teaching African American students. For these reasons, the researcher employed the chi-square test to explore what factors contributed to the identified attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of teachers because the researcher is interested in knowing whether there are any relationships between the survey items' themes and teachers' demographics. However, the chi-square result values do not tell the researcher the nature of the relationship, if any.

First, the researcher cross-tabulated using Pearson Chi-square to determine if there is a relationship between teachers' attitudes (regarding preparedness) and each of the following demographics: gender, age, race, educational attainment, political ideology, and school level.

Next, the researcher cross tabulated using Pearson Chi-square to determine if there is a relationship between teachers' attitudes (regarding race) and each of the following demographics: gender, age, race, ethnicity, and political ideology.

After, the researcher cross-tabulated using Pearson Chi-square to determine if there is a relationship between teachers' attitudes (regarding cognizance of issues that affect Black students) and each of the following demographics: gender, age, race, ethnicity, and years of experience working with African American students.

Lastly, the researcher cross-tabulated using Pearson Chi-square to determine if there is a relationship between teachers' attitudes (regarding culturally responsive curriculum) and each of the following demographics: gender, age, race, ethnicity, school level, raised in a diverse community, and type of training received.

*ANOVA Test*

The researcher used a one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) to evaluate the significance of any mean differences among the groups. Specifically, the researcher used the ANOVA to test for overall differences of opinions among the respondents due to the impact of the total years of teaching in elementary or middle school. The researcher computed all statistical analyses with a significance level of 0.05.

*Disclosure and Control of Potential Researcher's Bias*

This researcher conducted this study because she has a particular interest in knowing about teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions and how those factors impact student achievement. The researcher works in schools that have similar demographics and issues as the ones investigated in this study. One of the biases brought to this research arose from the fact that the researcher is African American and serves as a Teacher Leader in one of the districts that was the focus of the study. Ethnic students across the board in the district where she works fail and lack proficiency at their grade level. In fact, not one of the schools that participated in this study made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2016 ([newyorkschoools.com](http://newyorkschoools.com)).

The researcher's experiences and background resulted in a somewhat biased view, especially regarding the idea that culturally challenged teachers can negatively affect student achievement. However, these biases did not significantly affect the process of data collection as the researcher cross-referenced her ideas and perspectives with her committee members regarding the collection and the interpretation of the data. The researcher's committee members represent a diverse group of professionals who have extensive background in the field of education, psychology, and working with ethnic students. This helped to lessen the researcher's subjectivity when she collected, reported and interpreted the data.

The researcher's race and ethnicity are important because of the unique perspective that she brings to the study. This researcher has a personal interest in, and anecdotal professional knowledge of, issues pertaining to cultural sensitivity, student achievement, and student-teacher relationships. In 2017, the researcher became an early childhood literacy coach, focusing on professional development and teacher training to improve student achievement, especially in reading. Her belief is that educators are the most basic educational resource that communities provide for their children and that districts should provide training and support to ensure that every classroom has talented, dedicated, and well-prepared culturally sensitive teachers.

As a Black female educator, the researcher strove to remain as objective as possible about cultural differences and she did not let subtle prejudices and biases influence her perspective when she conducted her study. She was very aware that others could view her own interpretations, whether negative or positive as bias, and she made every effort to cross-reference her interpretation of the data with her dissertation chairperson and committee members to remain objective when reporting and interpreting the findings of this study.

#### Methodological Limitations of the Study

In addition to the above, limitations are consistent with the partial state of knowing that is inherent in social research. Researchers elucidate the limitations of their work to help readers know how they should interpret it (Glesne, 1999). It was the researcher's intent to focus only on elementary and middle school teachers, to discover their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about culturally sensitive teaching for African Americans, and how these beliefs, etc., translate into pedagogical practices and student achievement. It is the researcher's belief that if one treats children with respect and care at a young age (in elementary and middle school), and if they develop a positive attitude toward school and receive the support of their teachers, they are more

likely to thrive and survive throughout their later education. Strambler and Weinstein (2010) found, using a sample of 111 ethnic elementary students from California, that students' higher perception of negative teacher feedback predicted more devaluing of academics, but, greater perceived teacher care at the classroom level predicted less devaluing. Furthermore, a lower regard for academics consistently predicted poorer math test scores. Similarly, Gregory & Huang (2013) explained that positive teacher expectations, support and motivation in the lower grades had progressive effects on students, regardless of their risk status, particularly for lower income students, and is a strong predictor of student success in later grades.

Additionally, another limitation was that the teachers in this study only represented elementary and middle school teachers, not high school teachers. Researchers need to carry out further studies to investigate whether other researchers can generalize the results from this research to the general population of elementary and middle school teachers, and investigate whether the results apply to high school.

The researcher's next limitation was concern about individuals who participated in this study, but who do not have a background in education for African Americans. These individuals may or may not have experiences or knowledge about the issues at hand. Furthermore, objectivity may be impossible to establish using such individuals because they may have limited understanding of how Black students learn and/or may have shaped their point of view of African Americans based on how media outlets depict Blacks in a positive or negative manner on television or radio, in magazines, and on social media. The last limitation of this study was that the researcher conducted the study only in an urban area. Therefore, the results could differ in suburban or rural places.

### Chapter Summary

Chapter three reviewed the methodology used in the study. The purpose of this study was to determine the attitude of elementary and middle school teachers toward culturally sensitive teaching for African American students. To measure these concepts, the researcher developed a survey instrument that she used to examine teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about culturally sensitive constructivist teaching. The survey consisted of 50 items that required Likert scale responses. The researcher also collected demographic information as a part of this study. The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the results and to provide answers to the research questions.

The researcher is well aware of the enormous challenge that exists: the achievement gap between African American students and White students. Therefore, this study intends to bring further awareness to the issue, as well as contribute to its resolution, or, at least, help explain the phenomenon, so as to eventually produce a remedy. Chapter four will present the data collected from March 27, 2017 to April 6, 2017. The researcher will also analyze her findings in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five the researcher will summarize, discuss, and provide a conclusion about her findings.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings from the study the researcher conducted to examine teachers' attitudes and beliefs about culturally sensitive teaching. The researcher collected data using a survey instrument: *The Teacher Attitudes Towards Culturally Sensitive Teaching for African Americans* survey. The results of the analyses of the survey data and an overall summary of the findings are the two components of this chapter

The participants in this study consisted of 101 teachers from two community school districts in an urban area. There were 84 females and 17 males. Of the 101 surveys returned, only 85 were complete. The remaining 16 were partially complete, with most containing basic demographic data and some information on teacher attitudes- the central focus of this study. The overall survey response rate was 84%, well within the acceptable number of participants needed for this type of study. Possibly, the current issues of race and cultural sensitivity in our country may have contributed to participant failure to complete the entire survey. However, in summary, the mean for the overall response for the elementary sample was 3.35, with a standard deviation of .25094, and the mean for the secondary sample was 3.21, with a standard deviation of .255. Descriptive information for the sample appears in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall Survey Score*

School Level	M	N	SD
Elementary	3.3559	54	.25094
Secondary	3.2132	47	.25599
Total	3.2843	101	.26168



### Results of the Data Analyses

This section presents the results of the quantitative analysis of the responses provided by the study participants. Specifically, results from the following statistical tests will be presented: descriptive statistics, Pearson's chi-square, and one-way anova variance. The researcher based results on data from the *Teachers' Attitude Survey*.

#### *Sample Demographics*

Demographic data revealed that the sample consisted of 17 males and 84 females (see *Table 4.2. Demographics by Gender*).

Table 4.2

#### *Demographic Data by Gender*

Variables	Code Scheme	N	%
Gender	Female	84	83%
	Male	17	17%

The racial and ethnic composition of the sample was somewhat less reflective of the general population of the United States (Census, 2016) than of the current population structure found among teachers in poor performing districts (NYSED, 2016). Blacks or African Americans comprised the largest group, 49% of the sample. White or European Americans were the next largest group at 44%. The remaining groups, Asian Americans and Native Americans/American Indians, rounded out the count at a combined 8%, close to the population projections for these groups. Most of the teachers in this investigation self-identified as non-Hispanic/Latino American at 87%, while the others self-identified as Hispanic or Latino at 13%.

Of the 13% of participants who that identified as Hispanic, 8% were Black and 5% were White (see *Table 4.3. Demographics by Racial Group & Ethnicity*).

Table 4.3

*Demographic Data by Racial Groups & Ethnicity*

Variables	Code Scheme	N	%
Race	African American	49	49%
	European American	44	44%
	Asian American	6	6%
	Native American	2	2%
Ethnicity	Hispanic	13	13%
	Non-Hispanic	88	87%

Most of the teachers in this investigation had elementary certification (53%). The level of education for elementary teachers was greater than that of the secondary teachers (47%), but they were not too different from each other. A little less than one-half (43%) of all the educators surveyed had one Master's degree, while a little less than one-third had a second Master's or 30 credits beyond the Masters (32%). The remaining 11.0% had either an advanced degree/professional diploma or had a doctorate degree (see *Table 4.4 Demographics by Teaching Level & Education Level*).

Table 4.4

*Demographic Data by Teaching Level and Educational Attainment.*

Variables	Code Scheme	N	%
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Teaching Level	Elementary	54	53%
	Secondary	47	47%
Education Level	Bachelor's	15	15%
	Master's	43	43%
	Master's + 30	32	32%
	Advanced Degree	8	8%
	Doctorate	3	3%

Another important variable was the age of respondents. The respondents ranged from a minimum of 21 years old to a maximum of 61 years old. The mean age for teachers was 42.5 years ( $M=42.50$ ,  $SD=5.46$ ). The median age was slightly lower at 40.00 years.

Table 4.5

*Demographic Data by Age Range*

Variables (range)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	N
Age (20s-60s)	42.50	5.46	40.00	101

Experience varied for number of years teaching at current level (elementary or secondary). The range for years of teaching at current level varied from 1 to 22+ years. The average number of years teaching at the elementary level was 16 years ( $M=16.2$ ,  $SD=4.22$ ). The median years teaching at the elementary level was 10 years ( $MD=10.00$ ). The average years teaching at the secondary level was 8 years ( $M=8.5$ ,  $SD=1.66$ ). The median years teaching at the secondary level was 5 years ( $MD=5.00$ ). The range for total years teaching varied from 1 to 22

plus years. The average number of total years teaching was 14 years ( $M=14.5$ ,  $SD=3.15$ ) (see *Table 4.6 Current Level & Years Teaching*).

Table 4.6

*Demographic Data by Years Teaching at Current Level and Total Years Teaching*

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	N
Years Teaching at Elementary Level	16.20	4.22	10.00	101
Years Teaching at Secondary Level	8.50	1.66	5.00	101
Total Years Teaching	14.50	3.15	17.00	101

In addition to the number of years' teaching at current level and the total years' teaching, the researcher investigated the number of years' experience teaching African American students. The range for teachers' experience working with African American students was 1 to 16 plus years. The average number of years' experience teachers had working with Black students was 17 years ( $M=17$ ,  $SD=5.43$ ), and the median was 12 years ( $MD=12.00$ ) (see *Table 4.7. Years Exp. Working with Black Students*).

Table 4.7

*Demographic Data by Years of Experience Working With African Americans (A.A)*

Variables (range)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	N
Exp. Teaching A. A. (0-16+)	17.00	5.43	12.00	101

Table 4.8 displays data about respondents' training. Sixty-three percent responded that they had received sensitivity training for teaching Black students. Fifty-one percent reported that they did not receive any training for teaching ethnic students.

Table 4.8

*Demographic Data by Trainings*

Variable	Responses	N	%
Sensitivity Training	Yes	63	62%
	No	38	38%
Ethnic Training	Yes	49	49%
	No	52	51%

To gather a more in-depth sense of the sample, other important variables revealed teachers' political ideologies and childhood education. Forty-three percent identified as moderate, forty-one percent self-identified as liberal/progressive, and seventeen percent considered themselves conservative. Furthermore, 75% of teachers indicated that they are social conservative. Seventy-five percent of teachers surveyed attended public school as a child. Most noteworthy is the finding that 55% of the respondents indicated that they grew up in a diverse community and, as a result, attended schools that were diverse.

Table 4.9

*Demographic Data by Political Ideologies and Social Views*

Variables	Code Scheme	N	%
Political Ideology	Moderate	43	43%

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	Liberal/Progressive	41	41%
	Conservative	17	17%
Social Views	Social Conservative	75	75%
	Non-Social	26	26%
	Conservative		

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Although the demographic data reveals 101 participants, only 85 participants completed the entire survey (Survey Sections A and B), for 16 participants failed to complete section B of the survey. Therefore, the next section of this chapter will only report data for the 85 participants who completed the entire survey, that is, section A: demographic questions and section B: survey items that addressed teachers' attitudes toward teaching Black students. Henceforth, this entire chapter will only reflect data for the 85 respondents who completed Sections A and B.

#### *Survey Section B*

The construct of teachers' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions consisted of 50 items, with a four-item response scale. Although the survey contained 50 items, the researcher only utilized 48 for the purpose of answering the research questions. The researcher omitted statement # 7 (as a teacher I plan project-based learning lessons) and statement # 37 (curriculum should be modified to include all learners) because several participants, after completing their survey, expressed that they felt that those statements did not speak to teachers' attitudes, beliefs or perceptions as they related to their attitudes' toward Black students. Since these statements were perceived as irrelevant to assessing teachers' attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions, they were omitted.

The mean score for the theme *planning and preparation* is 2.0, which essentially means 'agree', indicating that the data set for this theme lies on the side of agree, and is one standard deviation from the mean. The mean score for the theme *race and ethnicity* is 2.3, which means 'agree', indicating that the data set for this theme lies on the side of agree, and is less than one ( $SD=0.7$ ) standard deviation from the mean. For the theme *knowledge of African American students*, the mean score is 2.5, which indicates 'neutral' value for this theme, as it lies on the mean and is zero standard deviations from the mean, and for attitudes about *curriculum and instruction for African American students*, the mean is 2.3, which means 'agree', indicating that the data set for this theme lies on the side of agree, and is less than one ( $SD=0.7$ ) standard deviation from the mean.

Table 4.10

*Mean and Standard Deviation of Study's Themes*

Theme	Mean Score	SD
Planning and Preparation	2.09	1.0
Race and Ethnicity	2.34	0.7
Knowledge of African American Students	2.55	0.1
Curriculum and Instruction	2.35	0.7

The researcher combined these measures into an overall scale for assessing teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about culturally relevant teaching and learning for African American students. The descriptive statistics for the survey appear in tables 4.11 to 4.14

## Survey Items for RQ 1—Descriptive Statistics

When asked survey items that addressed RQ1, *How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students?* sixty-nine percent of teachers agreed overall (39% agree and 30% strongly agree) that they are prepared to teach African American students (*see Table 4.11*).

*Table 4.11. Descriptive Statistics for RQ1: How do teachers perceive their preparedness for teaching African American students?*

	RQ1.1	RQ1.2	RQ1.3	RQ1.4	RQ1.5	RQ1.6	RQ1.8	RQ1.9	RQ1.10	RQ1.11	RQ1.49	Total	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	30	14	25	1	0	2	3	75	8%
Disagree	4	8	2	8	46	35	54	12	17	18	13	219	23%
Agree	36	47	28	37	9	30	6	51	43	34	45	364	39%
Strongly Agree	45	30	55	40	0	6	0	21	25	31	24	277	30%
	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	935	

*Research Question 1 Findings:*

Table 4.11 illustrates that the majority of teachers believe that they are equipped with the skills and tools needed to teach Black students. However, when individual survey items were analyzed there were several participants whose opinion varied from statement to statement. For example, 92% of educators reported that they felt that they were not equipped to teach students from diverse backgrounds. In addition, 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that college courses failed to prepare them to teach ethnic students. The researcher felt that these findings were noteworthy to report as further analysis needs to be conducted to gather a more comprehensive understanding of perceived preparedness for teaching African American students.



## Survey Items for RQ 2—Descriptive Statistics

When asked survey items that addressed Research Question 2, *Do race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold for African American students?* sixty-three percent of teachers agreed overall (36% agree and 27% strongly agree) that race and ethnicity played a role in the attitudes they hold about African American students (*see table 4.12*).

*Table 4.12. Descriptive statistics for RQ2: Do race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold for African American students?*

	RQ 2.12	RQ 2.13	RQ 2.14	RQ 2.15	RQ 2.16	RQ 2.17	RQ 2.18	RQ 2.19	RQ 2.20	RQ 2.21	RQ 2.22	RQ 2.23	RQ 2.44	RQ 2.46	RQ 2.47	RQ 2.48	RQ 2.50	Total	%
Strongly Disagree	5	6	0	2	23	0	0	0	0	2	1	14	57	11	33	11	25	179	12%
Disagree	24	23	4	8	34	10	15	13	3	8	1	34	25	38	42	42	44	368	25%
Agree	36	37	29	57	20	26	29	38	40	41	33	31	2	33	9	26	16	513	36%
Strongly Agree	20	19	52	18	8	49	41	34	42	34	50	6	1	3	1	6	0	385	27%
	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	1445	

*Research Question 2 Findings:*

More than half of the participants (63%) reported that race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes they hold about African American students. However, thirty-seven percent reported that race and ethnicity do not play a role in the attitudes they hold about African American students. To gather a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' beliefs about the role that race and ethnicity play in the attitudes they hold for Black students, the researcher examined the individual statements that covered the theme race and

ethnicity. Based on her analysis, she found that teachers' attitudes varied from statement to statement. For example, on statement RQ2.12, *I plan lessons that celebrate African American students in a positive way*, sixty-six percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they plan lessons that celebrate African American students positively, and thirty-four percent reported that they did not plan lessons that celebrate Black students in a positive manner. For statement RQ 2.14, *Ethnicity and culture are only celebrated at my school during major holidays*, ninety-five percent of teachers reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.

Table 4.12 also displays that sixty-seven percent of educators reported that they are not aware of the biases and stereotypes they have about Black students. For example, statement RQ2.17 states, *Race and ethnicity have little or nothing to do with student achievement*. Seventy-five teachers who were surveyed reported that race and ethnicity have much to do with student achievement. These findings may suggest that teachers believe that the achievement gap has much to do with students' race and ethnicity. As a result of this data analysis, it was determined that further research needs to be conducted to determine a more definitive answer to whether race and ethnicity play a role in the attitudes teachers hold about Black students.

## Survey Items for RQ 3—Descriptive Statistics

When asked survey items that addressed Research Question 3, *How cognizant are teachers of issues that affect African American students?* fifty-three percent (12% disagree and 41% strongly disagree) of teachers felt that they were not aware of the issues that affect African American students (*see table 4.13*).

*Table 4.13. Descriptive Statistics for RQ3: How cognizant are teachers of issues that affect African American students?*

	RQ3.24	RQ3.25	RQ3.26	RQ3.27	RQ3.28	RQ3.29	RQ3.30	RQ3.31	RQ3.32	RQ3.33	RQ3.34	RQ3.45	Total	%
Strongly Disagree	6	16	12	25	16	4	3	0	10	0	23	5	120	12%
Disagree	44	40	41	47	28	22	49	10	70	13	41	13	418	41%
Agree	30	28	30	13	39	43	30	48	4	47	18	53	383	38%
Strongly Agree	5	1	2	0	2	16	3	27	1	25	3	14	99	9%
	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	1020	

*Research Question 3 Findings*

Table 4.13 displays that fifty-three percent of teachers reported that they were not cognizant of issues that affect African American students, and forty-seven percent reported they were cognizant. Because there was only a small difference between those who reported that they were not aware and those who reported that they were aware of the issues that affect Black students, the researcher analyzed each individual statement covering RQ3. Further analysis of the statements revealed that there were many inconsistencies in how respondents responded to several of the items. Some contradicted their stated opinions.

## Survey Items for RQ 4—Descriptive Statistics

When asked survey items that addressed Research Question 4, *Are teachers addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction?* fifty-eight percent of teachers agreed overall (41% agree and 17% strongly agree) that they are addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction (*see table 4.14*).

*Table 4.14. Descriptive Statistics for RQ4: Are teachers addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction?*

	RQ4.35	RQ4.36	RQ4.38	RQ4.39	RQ4.40	RQ4.41	RQ4.42	RQ4.43	Total	%
Strongly Disagree	0	6	9	4	34	6	1	10	70	10%
Disagree	3	38	48	23	38	31	16	19	216	32%
Agree	45	32	17	39	9	42	45	50	279	41%
Strongly Agree	37	9	11	19	4	6	23	6	115	17%
	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	680	

*Research Question 4 Findings*

Fifty-eight percent of the teachers reported that they are addressing the needs of African American students with their curriculum and instruction. Forty-two percent reported that the needs of African American students are not addressed with current curriculum and instruction. The researcher examined the rate at which teachers responded to the survey items that addressed RQ4 to gather a more comprehensive understanding of the attitudes of teachers as they related to RQ4, *Are teachers addressing the needs of*

*African American students with their curriculum and instruction?* The researcher noted that based on the responses of the participants a little more than half of the teachers believe that they are addressing the needs of their Black students with their current curriculum and instruction, and the others reported that they are not.

Because this study is the first of many studies that the researcher intends to complete, and it is exploratory, the researcher included the above data for the sole purpose of being descriptive. In addition, individual statements were used for Chi-square tests (See Tables 4.19 to 4.22). There was no statistically significant meaning connected to the data above. It was only reported by the researcher as a way of understanding the overall attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions teachers hold as they relate to themes that were investigated in this study.

Tables 4.15 to 4.18 display individual statements by responded rate of educators' opinions.

*Table 4.15. Individual Statements Addressing RQ1*

<i>Theme #1 Planning and Preparation</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
RQ1.1 - Teacher preparation programs should focus on culturally relevant teaching.	0%	5%	42%	53%
RQ1.2 - I consider my students' culture when planning lessons.	0%	10%	55%	35%
RQ1.3 - When preparing my classroom, I think about my students and how I can create an environment that fosters learning for all students.	0%	2%	33%	65%
RQ1.4 - I use materials that represent various perspectives.	0%	9%	44%	47%
RQ1.5 - I spend time learning about my students' community.	35%	54%	11%	0%
RQ1.6 - The school district I work in has sufficient opportunities to participate in sensitivity training on cultural differences.	16%	41%	35%	8%
RQ1.8 - I am equipped to teach students from diverse backgrounds.	29%	64%	7%	0%
RQ1.9 - College courses failed to prepare me to teach ethnic students.	1%	14%	60%	25%
RQ1.10 - I prepare assessments that mirror my students' learning styles.	0%	20%	51%	29%
RQ1.11 - I plan activities that empower African American students.	2%	21%	40%	37%
RQ1.49 - I believe teaching social justice principles increases achievement for African American students.	4%	15%	53%	28%

*Note.* The researcher randomly selected the items (variables) below to illustrate an example of the rate at which teachers responded.

The items were selected using a process known as unrestricted random sampling (lottery method). The researcher carefully numbered all items on separate slips of paper of the same size, shape and color. The items were then folded and mixed in a container. The researcher made a blindfolded selection. The selection of items consequently depended on chance. These items do not explain how or why teachers responded as they did. The research displayed the data only for the purpose of highlighting the rate of teachers' attitudes. Thus, this data only reveal teachers' opinions, and do not disclose the why(s) behind their attitudes. Eighty percent of teachers

reported that (item 1.10) they prepare assessments that mirror their students' learning styles. Ninety-one percent of teachers agreed that (item 1.4) they use materials that represent various perspectives. Eighty-five percent of the respondents revealed that (item 1.9) their college courses failed to prepare them to teach ethnic students. Eighty-one percent reported that they believe that (item 1.49) teaching social principles increases achievement for Black students.

Table 4.16 Individual Statements Addressing RQ2

<i>Theme #2 Race and Ethnicity</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
RQ2.12 - I plan lessons that celebrate African American students in a positive way.	6%	27%	43%	24%
RQ2.13 - Test biases are responsible for the racial achievement gap.	7%	27%	44%	22%
RQ2.14 - Ethnicity and culture are only celebrated at my school during major holidays.	0%	8%	34%	58%
RQ2.15 - Closing the achievement gap is very important.	3%	9%	67%	21%
RQ2.16 - I am aware of biases and stereotypes I have about students.	27%	40%	24%	9%
RQ2.17 - Race and ethnicity have little or nothing to do with student achievement.	0%	12%	41%	47%
RQ2.18 - White children are better behaved than Black children.	0%	8%	52%	40%
RQ2.19 - Racism is a major problem in education.	0%	15%	45%	40%
RQ2.20 - Suspension and retention are major issues for African American students.	0%	4%	47%	49%
RQ2.21 - Students should be taught about racial justice.	2%	9%	49%	40%
RQ2.22 - High quality education is an issue in most African American communities.	1%	1%	39%	59%
RQ2.23 - Racism in any manner lowers a child's self-esteem.	16%	40%	36%	8%
RQ2.44 - The curriculum I use represents diverse perspectives.	67%	29%	3%	1%
RQ2.46 - Teachers are required to make accommodations for students from diverse backgrounds.	13%	45%	39%	3%
RQ2.47 - I often feel overwhelmed and unequipped to implement a culturally relevant curriculum.	39%	49%	11%	1%
RQ2.48 - Teaching an African-centered curriculum excludes other groups of students.	13%	49%	31%	7%
RQ2.50 - African American students should be taught using African-principles.	29%	52%	19%	0%

*Note.* The researcher randomly selected the items (variables) below to illustrate an example of the rate at which teachers responded

using a process known as unrestricted random sampling (lottery method). The items do not explain how or why teachers' responded



at the rate they did. Therefore, this data were only displayed for the purpose of highlighting the rate at which teachers' attitudes were measured. This data only reveal teachers' opinions, and do not disclose the why(s) behind their attitudes. Sixty-two percent of teachers reported that (item 2.48) teaching using an African-centered curriculum does not exclude other groups. Eighty-one percent believe that (item 2.50) students should not be taught using African principles. Ninety-six percent reported that (item 2.44) the curriculum they currently use does not represent diverse learners. Sixty-six percent of educators agreed or strongly agreed that (item 2.13) test biases are responsible for the racial achievement gap. Nearly all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that closing the achievement gap was important.

*Table 4.17. Individual Statements Addressing RQ3*

<i>Theme #3 Knowledge of African American Students</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
RQ3.24 - Attitudes and prejudices about groups of students impact the way I view and teach them.	7%	52%	35%	6%
RQ3.25 - I have entertained thoughts of “implied racism” that I am aware of when working with African American students.	19%	47%	33%	1%
RQ3.26 - I believe that African American students are inferior to White students.	14%	48%	37%	1%
RQ3.27 - I have had (past or present) negative experiences with African American students that affected how I have treated them.	29%	55%	15%	1%
RQ3.28 - Most African American students are self-motivated to learn.	19%	33%	46%	2%
RQ3.29 - I feel that most African American students do not value their education.	4%	26%	51%	19%
RQ3.30 - I often have to discipline African American students more than any other group of students.	4%	57%	35%	4%
RQ3.31 - African American students are likely to be labeled “gifted”.	0%	12%	56%	32%
RQ3.32 - Most African American boys are hostile and aggressive.	12%	82%	5%	1%
RQ3.33 - Society often makes excuses for African American students’ failures.	1%	15%	55%	29%
RQ3.34 - Most African American parents value their child’s education.	27%	48%	21%	4%
RQ3.45 - A curriculum should focus on the skills students need to know and not students’ culture.	6%	16%	62%	16%

*Note.* The researcher randomly selected the items (variables) below to illustrate an example of the rate at which teachers responded using a process known as unrestricted random sampling (lottery method). The items do not explain how or why teachers responded at the rate they did. Therefore, this data were only displayed for the purpose of highlighting the rate at which teachers’ attitudes were measured. This data only reveal teachers’ opinions, and do not disclose the why(s) behind their attitudes. Therefore, this data was only

displayed for the purpose of highlighting the rate at which teachers' attitudes were measured. Seventy-eight percent of educators surveyed felt that (item 3.45) a curriculum should focus on the skills students need to know and not their culture. Seventy-five percent of educators reported that (item 3.34) most African American parents do not value their child's education. Fifty-nine percent felt that (item 3.24) attitudes and prejudices about student groups do not affect the way they view or teach them.

*Table 4.18 Individual Statements Addressing RQ4*

<i>Theme #4 Curriculum &amp; Instruction</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
RQ4.35 - Most African American students do not feel accepted at school.	0%	3%	53%	44%
RQ4.36 - I look for opportunities to learn about my students' culture.	7%	45%	38%	10%
RQ4.38 - I understand the issues that African American students face.	11%	56%	20%	13%
RQ4.39 - African American children are more interested in rap music than academics.	5%	27%	46%	22%
RQ4.40 –Schools with an ethnic population need a diverse faculty	40%	45%	11%	4%
RQ4.41 - If African American students are not learning, I attribute that to their lack of motivation to learn.	7%	37%	49%	7%
RQ4.42 - My experiences with trying to get African American parents involved in their children's educational experience have been unsuccessful.	1%	19%	54%	26%
RQ4.43 – When I'm teaching I don't see my students' race. I just teach.	12%	22%	59%	7%

*Note.* The researcher randomly selected the items (variables) below to illustrate an example of the rate at which teachers responded using a process known as unrestricted random sampling (lottery method). The items do not explain how or why teachers' responded at the rate they did. Therefore, this data were only displayed for the purpose of highlighting the rate at which teachers' attitudes were measured. This data only reveals teachers' opinions, and do not disclose the why(s) behind their attitudes. Most teachers (66%) reported that (item 4.43) they do not see students' race when teaching. Eighty percent of teachers reported that (item 4.42) they were unsuccessful trying to get Black parents involved in their children's education. Seventy-two educators believe that schools with an ethnic population do not need a diverse faculty. Ninety-seven percent reported that (item 4.35) most African American students do not feel accepted at school.

## Pearson Chi-Square Results

The researcher conducted chi-square tests to determine whether the variables gender, age, school level, race, ethnicity, and political ideology related to any of the survey items. This data analysis provided information for the researcher on whether any variable had a dependent relationship with an independent variable. If the p-value is less than or equal to the significance level set at 0.05, there is a statistically significant association between the variables. The results from the chi-square tests follow:

Table 4.19

*Attitudes About Preparedness for Teaching African American Students by Age, Educational Attainment & School Level*

Survey Item	Score	Variable(s)	P-Value
RQ1.1	2.14	Age	.002
RQ1.2	2.08	School Level	.030
RQ1.5	2.06	Age & Education Attainment	.011
RQ1.9	2.04	Age	.011
RQ1.11	2.06	Age	.020

*Note.* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 there is a statistically significant association between the variables. Variables that were not statistically significant were not included in this table.

As Table 4.19 illustrates, some variables have a statistically significant association. Responses to a number of items indicated elementary school teachers had an appreciation for planning for and teaching culturally relevant lessons to African American students. For example, item 1.2, "I consider my students' culture when planning lessons," resulted in high agreement (where 54 of 54 elementary school teachers either agreed or strongly agreed) by elementary school respondents. According to the data analysis, the responses for item 1.2

revealed that more elementary school educators believed they consider their students' culture when planning lessons than middle school educators do ( $p=0.03$ ). Question 1.5 was also significant, revealing that there is a significant relationship between survey item 1.5 and the variables: age and educational attainment. For example, item 1.5, "I spend time learning about my students' community" revealed a statistically significant relationship at  $p=0.01$  for this item by respondents who were 30 and under and have master's degrees. The data revealed that these individuals reported that they spend time learning about their students' culture more than those with less or greater than a master's degree and who are older than 30 years old. The survey items that focus on teachers' preparedness for teaching Black students and for being culturally sensitive include questions 1.1, 1.9, and 1.11. The Chi square test revealed a statistically significant relationship for age of participants. Younger participants (30 and under) were more supportive of culturally relevant teaching and felt more prepared to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student population than older educators (30 above). However, the Chi square test for the variables race and gender did not reveal a statistically significant relationship.

Table 4.20

*Beliefs About The Role that Race and Ethnicity Play in the Attitudes Teachers Hold for African American Students by Political Ideology & Race*

Survey Item	Score	Variable (s)	P-Value
RQ2.17	3.71	Political Ideology	.014
RQ2.18	3.93	Race	.009
RQ2.19	3.12	Political Ideology	.012
RQ2.20	3.98	Political Ideology	.015
RQ2.22	3.86	Political Ideology	.021

*Note.* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 there is a statistically significant association between the variables. Variables that were not statistically significant were not included in this table.

Table 4.20 revealed that survey items 2.17, 2.19, 2.20, and 2.22 were significant, revealing that there is a statistically significant relationship between the beliefs of the respondents and their political ideology. The participants who self-identified as moderate had a stronger belief that race and ethnicity play roles in teachers' beliefs about the Black student population than any other party (liberal or conservative). For example, item 2.17, "Race and ethnicity have little or nothing to do with student achievement" reveals high disagreement for this item by respondents with moderate political beliefs ( $p=0.01$ ). Responses to a number of other items indicated teachers have strong beliefs about the role of race and ethnicity in teaching and learning for Black children. For example, Item 2.20, "Suspension and retention are major issues for African American students" resulted in higher agreement by respondents ( $p=0.01$ ) who self-identified as moderate than by those who self-identified as conservative or liberal. According to data analysis, the responses for item 2.18 revealed that more African American participants believed that race and ethnicity have nothing to do with the beliefs and attitudes they hold for teaching Black children than European participants ( $p=0.00$ ). A Chi square test for the variables gender, age, and ethnicity did not reveal a statistically significant relationship.

Table 4.21

*Teachers' Attitudes About Their Knowledge of African American Students by Age, Race, and Years of Experience Working with African American Students*

Survey Item	Score	Variable(s)	P-Value
RQ3.27	2.00	Age	.011
RQ3.28	3.16	Years of Exp.	.037

RQ3.29	2.14	Years of Exp.	.022
RQ3.32	2.22	Race	.024
RQ3.45	2.38	Years of Exp.	.025

*Note.* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 there is a statistically significant association between the variables. Variables that were not statistically significant were not included in this table.

The researcher performed a Pearson chi-square test to determine whether this grouping of variables of age, race, years of experience with African American students, and total years' teaching was related to teachers' perceptions about their knowledge of issues that affect the education of African American children. Survey items that addressed beliefs about teachers' knowledge about the issues that impact teaching and learning for Black students included question 3.45, which stated, "A curriculum should focus on the skills students need to know and not students' culture," and question 3.28, "Most African American students are self-motivated to learn".

Responses to a number of items indicated that teachers are cognizant of issues that affect teaching and learning for Black students. For example, item 3.27, "I have had (past or present) negative experiences with African American students that affected how I have treated them," resulted in high disagreement by respondents ( $p=0.01$ ) who were of the age range 30 and under. Responses to item 3.32, "Most African American boys are hostile and aggressive" ( $p=0.02$ ) revealed that a majority of Caucasian respondents significantly disagreed with the survey item, indicating that Caucasian teachers may be aware of the issues that affect how they teach and treat Black students.

Data analysis revealed a significant relationship between years of experience working with African American students and the attitude of respondents as it relates to survey items 3.29 and 3.45. Responses to these survey items indicate high disagreement by respondents with 5-16



years of experience concerning the need for teachers to be cognizant of issues that affect the way they teach Black students. For example 59 of the 85 participants that had 5-16 years of experience teaching agreed or strongly agreed with item 3.29 which states, "I feel that most African American students do not value their education" indicating that they do not believe that Black students value their education.

The researcher also noted that there was a significant relationship between item 3.45, "A curriculum should focus on the skills students need to know and not students' culture", and years of teaching experience working with Black students. The data analysis revealed that teachers with 5-16 years of teaching experience working with African American students strongly believed that a curriculum that focuses only on skills, and not on students' culture, is needed for teaching and learning to occur for Black students. A Chi square test for the variables gender, ethnicity, and total years teaching did not reveal statistically significant relationships.

Table 4.22

*Beliefs About Addressing the Needs of their African American Students through Curriculum and Instruction by Race and Type of Training Received.*

Survey Item	Score	Variable(s)	P-Value
RQ4.35	2.18	Race	.002
RQ4.36	2.65	Race	.021
RQ4.38	2.27	Training	.014
RQ4.39	2.65	Race	.020
RQ4.41	2.59	Training	.003

*Note.* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 there is a statistically significant association between the variables. Variables that were not statistically significant were not included in this table.

The researcher performed a Pearson chi-square test to determine whether the grouping variables of gender, age, school level, ethnicity, raised in a diverse community, and type of training were related to beliefs about cultural competency and culturally relevant instruction. Survey Items 4.35-4.36, 4.38, 4.39, and 4.41 focused specifically on participants' attitudes and values regarding their cultural competency for teaching African Americans. There were more discrepancies among respondents' responses with these survey items than with any of the other items presented on the survey. For example, Item 4.39, "African American children are more interested in rap music than academics" resulted in high agreement amongst Black teachers ( $p=0.02$ ), indicating that African American participants believe that Black students are more interested in rap music as opposed to academics than White American teachers believe. Another example, item 4.36, "I look for opportunities to learn about my students' culture," resulted in high agreement ( $p=0.02$ ), indicating that Caucasian participants seek out opportunities to learn about their (African American) students' culture more than African American teachers.

Data analysis also revealed a significant relationship between type of training received and the attitude of respondents as related to survey item 4.38, "I understand the issues that African American students face". Forty-seven of the eighty-five participants disagreed with that statement. Responses to this survey item indicate higher disagreement by respondents with pre-service training than those who have received professional development and/or in-service training. Survey item 4.41 states, "If African American students are not learning, I attribute that to their lack of motivation to learn", and yielded high agreement by respondents with pre-service training. For example, 48 of the 85 participants who reported that they had no pre-service training and no professional development training agreed or strongly agreed that they attribute African American students' lack of learning to their lack of motivation to learn. Because this

study only reports teachers' opinion, there may be several factors that prompted those teachers' opinion. Therefore, further exploration needs to be conducted to determine if teachers lack the cultural competencies needed to teach Black students. A Chi square test for the variables gender, age, ethnicity, school level, and raised in a diverse community did not reveal a statistically significantly relationship.

Table 4.23

*One-way ANOVA for Teachers' Cultural Sensitivity Survey Scores*

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1.11	3.17	1.277	.033
2.12	1.56	.897	.037

*Note.* ANOVA is significant at the 0.05 level. If the sig-value is less than 0.05 there is a statistically significant association between the variables. If the sig-value is greater than 0.05 there is no statistically significant association between the variables.

Table 4.23 displays the results of the one-way ANOVA test that was conducted to determine if there are any relationships among the survey items. The results from this data analysis revealed that there is a relationship between items 1.11, *I plan activities that empower African American students* and 2.12, *I plan lessons that celebrate African American students in a positive way*.

Table 4.24

*ANOVA*

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Between Groups	.152	1	.152	2.240	.137
Within Groups	6.764	100	.068		
Total	6.916	101			

*Note.* ANOVA is significant at the 0.05 level. If the sig-value is less than 0.05 there is a statistically significant association between the variables. If the sig-value is greater than 0.05 there is no statistically significant association between the variables.

Table 4.24 displays the results of the ANOVA for between and within groups (elementary and middle school teachers). The analysis of variance for between groups and within groups had a F score of 2.240 and significance level (probability level) of .137, which in essence means that even though the test revealed a difference between elementary and middle school participants' attitudes towards planning for teaching African Americans students, this difference found would happen 13% of the time. In other words this difference was not statistically significant.

#### Findings for ANOVA Test

The researcher used an analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure to measure for differences in opinion due to teaching level (comparing the two groups: elementary and middle school). Analysis of the 48 survey items resulted in two significant correlations with survey items 1.11 and 2.12. The one-way analysis of variance revealed no significant differences among the groups in teachers' attitudes towards planning for teaching African American students as measured by the *Teachers Attitudes Toward Culturally Sensitive Teaching Survey*. Analysis of the participants' responses indicated that teaching level did not have an impact on the participants' attitudes toward planning for teaching Black students.

#### Qualitative Data

##### *Teachers' Accounts of Teaching African American Students*

Although this study did not examine qualitative data, as it was an initial exploratory study, the researcher felt that the responses from survey question #17 provided insightful information related to the attitudes teachers hold regarding teaching and learning for Black students. Therefore, to enrich the study, this researcher included the responses of those participants who provided additional information about African American students through

survey question #17 below which stated, *Please write any additional comments you may have concerning teaching African American students.*

- “Very difficult to teach if you don't know them”.
- “One professional development on teaching diverse learners”.
- “In my extensive teaching experience, I have found that African American students are just as capable of achieving high academic grades as students of other races and/or ethnicities, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances or so-called disabilities”.
- “When I began teaching African American students I was the only one in my school they could identify with racially. Often times they were not taught by teachers that looked like them and this begins the conversation of students who acted out because they felt they could not relate to the teachers in front of them”.
- “Teaching African American students has been an enlightening experience where their potential and talents are amazing when they have the proper nurturing and supportive leaning environment”.
- “It is imperative that you understand the culture so that you can educate African American students from a certain angle. If you have a better understanding of what our students go through, the chances are better that they will trust and confide in you. Once the students' guard is down, they are willing to try harder.”
- “Not every teacher is equipped to teach children of African descent”.
- “One needs empathy to teach African American students. As an educator of African American students, I, sometimes have to play the roles of a guardian, social worker, and a teacher”.

- “Lack of resources available to educate Black students in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods”.
- “It is important to gain knowledge of the history, cultural dynamics, countries of origin, and current socio-economics situations, including diets of African-Americans and understand that these factors directly affect African-American children on many levels, and therefore affects how they receive education”.
- “You cannot have a disconnect for the children you teach”.
- “It is important for teachers to understand the cultural background of the students that they teach”.
- “During my graduate studies, I took a class where we focused on the specific needs of students from disadvantaged neighborhoods. We looked at how issues which often seem simple to most were important aspects of education. A pre-service teacher or a teacher who taught in a thriving neighborhood may not understand how the absence of breakfast or a quiet place to study could have a profound impact on learning”.
- “I feel that the students need to see more male (teachers) visible as strong leaders in their schools. I'm a strong disciplinarian and try to lead my students in that area as well as academics. Consistency with what I say and do is very important as well. I also include my parents as a partnership in teaching their child”.
- “My concern is the African American children having access to the same resources as their non - African peers. It feels like my students have the bare minimum and are expected to compete with other nationalities”.
- “I find that many white teachers who I have worked with have low expectations for their African American students and feel they are doing a great service to "these"

students by teaching them. This is a HUGE problem in our education system”.

- “I think it is important that African American students see teachers that look like them. It is especially important for young men to see male teachers”.
- “Socioeconomic and sensitivity training would be nice to have, especially dealing with mostly minority dominated community schools, to better understand where the children are coming from emotionally and other wise”.
- “There is a lack of teaching self love in a system that is operating on the basis of data and not nurturing the child as a whole”.
- “Learning to navigate external expectations, both positive and negative, in order to find success on their own terms. Navigating the difference between what is and what should be, and understanding the extent to which both must be taken into account in order to understand the world around them”.
- “In my experience as an ESL/ENL teacher, I have not had many opportunities to work with African American students”.
- “One thing that comes to mind is how different our unit of study on Civil Rights, Segregation, and Slavery might have been if we had no African American children in the room. Students and teachers did not know whether to say "African Americans" or "black people" or "blacks" and felt uncomfortable doing so. It was like they already were confused about how to talk about race and historical implications”.
- “I definitely feel like the system in place is set up so that it can be self-sustaining. Behaviors are tolerated in Black schools that would not be tolerated elsewhere. Part of the blame goes to the education system. The other part goes to the parents/families”.

- “I grew up in NYC, always around African American students/friends. Now teach in a predominately African American school population. Love all of my students, no matter what race”.
- “Teachers and parents must have high expectations for students’ academic success”
- “The communities that many of these students live in sometimes sets them up for failure”.
- “When I teach my students, I am motivated and fueled by those who have gone before them and attempted to get an education but had to sneak and learn, choose work over education, or it was simply that they were not able to learn for whatever reason. I think about where African American have been in the past and I teach with that fervor encouraging them to push themselves harder each and every day”.

#### Summary of Chapter Four

Chapter four provided an analysis of the data collected in the research study. The researcher presented and analyzed descriptive and inferential statistics, which the researcher used to attempt to provide answers to the research questions. Chapter five will present findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future studies.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS - FINAL CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

One of the most daunting tasks for improving achievement for Black children is identifying and remediating the issues that are causal factors for the underachievement of this population. In order to make progress toward improving student outcomes, it is imperative that we look closely at all components of schooling, including the teaching staff. Survey results from this dissertation research showed some inconsistency in educators' attitudes and beliefs that could be a possible factor in educational outcomes for Black students, which may be widening the achievement gap.

#### Discussion of Findings

Nearly all teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that teacher preparation programs should focus on culturally relevant teaching. Yet, sixty-nine percent disagree or strongly disagree that teachers should teach African American students using African principles. Based on their responses, it indicates that some educators may not recognize the magnitude of culturally relevant teaching on achievement. The researcher feels that teachers would not feel this way if they knew more about African principles, so we need to educate them in pre-service training and through professional development. Although teachers reported that they feel that they are meeting the needs of their African American students, the researcher believes teachers could better fulfill the needs of their students through teaching that uses African principles. Gallavan et al (2005) argued that teachers, especially at the novice level, are not always aware of the vastly different worlds their students live in. Instead, they assume that they are teaching, and that their students are learning. This assumption allows for many teachers to utilize educational

approaches that are a cultural mismatch for their class. Research shows that one of the greatest determinants of students' inability to succeed in a classroom is the deficient practices of their teacher (Rice, 2003).

Most teacher preparation programs across the United States include courses that emphasize culturally responsive teaching practices grounded in African principles, but not all teacher preparation programs are created equal (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 1999). As a result, many teachers may have a misunderstanding of African principles. Rice (2003) argued that some programs are superficial and provide generic strategies for teaching for diversity. Teacher prep programs need to help teachers find "generative ways to understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own" (p.495). This researcher and others argue that effective teacher preparation programs can help teachers better understand and reach African American children when courses guide teachers to understand their own socio-cultural history (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and help teachers see that they come with their own cultural identity, and implicit biases, which are often formed automatically and unintentionally, but which result in attitudes, behaviors or actions that are prejudiced for or against a person or group of people (Cochran-Smith, 2004). This is not an act of racism. However, racism, intentional or not, certainly plays a major role here. This may be a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

People, especially those with power and privilege, perceive those without power and privilege as "the others", see them as incapable of learning, and/or have low expectations for their learning. It is crucial for teachers to receive courses and trainings to undo many of the biases they may have about Black students so as to better understand them. Training will also assist in equipping teachers with the tools and knowledge they need to foster a culturally responsive environment. Culturally responsive training requires teachers to construct a broad

base of knowledge that shifts as students, contexts, and subject matters change. As a result, teachers' expectations for learning may be elevated for Black children (Banks, et al., 2004).

Additionally, teacher preparation programs should provide course work in the three themes of culturally responsive teaching, that is, (1) cultural relevance and pedagogy connected to students' cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2000, Sleeter, & Grant, 2000), (2) communities of learners who socially construct knowledge inclusive of all students (Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002); and (3) culturally responsive teaching that reflects a social justice perspective and challenges assumptions and the status quo (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter and Grant, 2000). These preparation programs will equip teachers with the strategies and resources needed to address the whole child. As a result, teachers will better understand and met the needs of African American children.

Another indicator that teachers in these schools may not be meeting the academic needs of their students is that six-five percent of the participants do not believe that they were adequately prepared to teach students from diverse backgrounds. The teachers recognize that they have not had the training necessary to adequately meet the needs of the ethnic students in their schools who are performing poorly academically and socially. In addition, seventy-four percent of participants do not feel that they were adequately prepared to teach students of color, who comprise at some schools represented in this research ninety percent of the student population. Children who fall into these categories are at high risk for underachieving.

This researcher was alarmed by her finding, that so many teachers in the study feel unprepared, claim that society makes too many excuses for African American students, and blame low academic performance on students being more interested in rap music than academics. It is imperative that the teachers in these schools understand that if they were not

properly prepared to teach ethnic students, they may not be meeting their students' needs. They may, in turn, at least partly, but maybe unintentionally, be responsible for the achievement gap. Educators who are products of culturally relevant training would recognize that a lack of preparation is an injustice to a large population of our nation's students. They would have the ability to not only identify this prevalent social justice issue, but also to challenge its very existence (Jennings, 2006).

Teachers may also benefit from cultural sensitivity training because seventy percent of the surveyed teachers believe White children are better behaved than Black children. Additionally, fifty-six percent of teachers claim that they do not notice race when teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Johnson (2002) alleged that White teachers often claim color blindness. Researchers found that this is often because White teachers do not see their whiteness or understand the effects of race on schooling (Gere et al, 2009). Race must be examined during teacher preparation courses and should be required for teachers' professional development. Milner (2006), stated "...cultural and racial reflection is necessary for all teachers-even pre-service teachers of color-because many pre-service teachers of color have internalized, validated, and reified pervasive, counterproductive stereotypes about themselves and others" (356).

One of the most important components of preparing culturally sensitive educators is understanding the historic importance of race in America and how it has impacted schooling. Milner (2006) stated that pre-service teachers often lack the knowledge base necessary to understand the impact of racial differences on education. It is vital for educators to explore what it means to be a person of color in society in order to work toward a more just system of education. To ignore race is to ignore the marginalization and discrimination students in our

country face. Seldon (1980) stated: "To be 'color-blind' requires me to ignore a history and present fact of prejudice, discrimination and racism built on assumptions that white people are superior to people of color. To be ignorant of racism is to assure that we cannot move beyond it (p. 1)".

It is compulsory to question the intent behind claims of color-blindness. Teachers who have not had cultural sensitivity training may fear that seeing color is racist. However, the needs and experiences of Black students can be vastly different from their more affluent White counterparts. It is crucial that educators not only notice the race of their students, but also have the knowledge to understand what privileges, injustices, and needs exist for those students. It is only then that teachers will be able to effectively meet their students' academic needs, thus closing the racial achievement gap.

This researcher feels that a belief in color-blindness is not the only misconception that many teachers have. Eighty-two percent of surveyed teachers believe that most African American students do not feel accepted at school. Educators who lack an understanding of the realities of self-esteem and racial identity development may be doing a disservice to their students. It is dangerous to tell students from historically marginalized groups that all they must do is work hard to accomplish the same things as their peers from the dominant culture. In reality, the American Dream is not attainable for all who try to achieve it (Mc Namee & Miller, 2004). Michelle Rhee, former chancellor of the Washington D.C. public schools, stated that a child's future success can be predicted simple by looking at his/her zip code. The idea that Black students need to study harder and be self-driven and they will succeed is just myth (Rehee, 2013). The reality of the situation, as Ms. Rhee points out, is that students do not have that much control over their future. While there will always be exceptions, for many African American

students, the education that they receive will not adequately prepare them to be college and career ready (Equityinlearning.act, 2015). It is dangerous for teachers to believe and pass on the idea that what students simply need to do is work hard to succeed. Instead, educators need to be aware of the injustices in our society that impede student achievement (Damico, 2003) and who can create classrooms where students are given the tools to overcome these obstacles (Damico, 2003; Love & Kruger, 2005). For many teachers, this means working twice as hard. They may need to spend more time calling parents, visiting homes, seeking outside resources, challenging school practices, critiquing curriculum, creating opportunities for critical thought and self-reflection, staying after, coming in early, and working with the community. Cultural sensitivity training and culturally relevant curriculum can provide teachers with the tools necessary to help students overcome the obstacles that come with their race (Akoto, 1994; CIBI, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Madhubuti, & Madhubuti, 1994; Nobles, 1990).

Seventy-five percent of surveyed teachers believe race does not affect students' ability to learn in the classroom. This needs to be examined closely, considering that so many teachers felt unequipped to teach African American students. The teacher responses could be indicative of a lack of concrete understanding of race in education. Teachers need to understand that "race has consequences," which means that a child's racial make-up may ultimately affect the quality of education s/he receives (McDonough, 2009, p. 529). Educators who have been taught from a culturally relevant perspective understand that race matters in our society; that it affects educational opportunities. It is a teacher's duty to provide students with an education that helps make sense of the inequalities in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This knowledge will empower students to successfully navigate through a system that has been designed to under serve them (Hooks, 1994). If teachers are unwilling to admit that race can determine the quality

of the education a student receives, they may not be successful meeting the specific needs of diverse populations.

Supporters of culturally relevant education believe that all children, regardless of race, social class, ability level, or gender should have access to high quality education. Yet, when asked, 44 of the 49 African American teachers surveyed do not look for opportunities to learn about their students' culture. We must wonder why so many Black teachers do not look for opportunities to learn about their students' culture, as it is an integral part of preparing and planning for teaching ethnic students. At one point, many African Americans argued from a position of sameness. That is, they asserted that Black and White children were alike and deserved the same educational opportunities. This rhetoric of equality meant sameness tended to ignore the distinctive qualities of African American culture and suggested that if schools made schooling experiences identical for African Americans by providing extra funding and resources they would somehow produce identical results (Tate, Ladson-Billings, & Grant, 1993).

Could it be that these teachers believe that all students are the same and that looking for opportunities to learn about their students' culture is not necessary, or could it be that they feel that they understand their students' culture because they are a part of it? Gay (2000) explained that it is important that all teachers, regardless of their ethnicity, to learn and hold themselves accountable for culturally responsive teaching for ethnic students. Shujaa (1994) argued that teachers, regardless of their race need to have coursework and professional development opportunities that focus on culturally responsive teaching. The researcher pondered: Is it enough to change teachers' beliefs, without looking for opportunities to learn about their students' culture? There is a need for more research to determine if professional development would be sufficient to change teachers' beliefs.

Another indicator that Black teachers may be insensitive to the cultural needs of Black children are that 49 of the 49 Black teachers surveyed felt that African American children are more interested in rap music than academics. Forty-seven of the 49 teachers also reported that most African American students do not value their education. These alarming findings could be indicative of a lack of cultural sensitivity. This researcher was perplexed that so many African American teachers seemed to be harder on and more insensitive to the cultural needs of children of their own race. The researcher assumed that Black teachers would be more sensitive to the needs of Black children, but these results prove different. One possible reason that Black teachers seem insensitive to Black children could be that not all Blacks have the same cultural traditions and values. For example, depending on what region of the world these teachers are from, they may have different world views about education. Therefore, their lack of sensitivity may be influenced by their traditions and values. For example, this researcher's parents are both of African descent, but culturally different.

The researcher's mother is from New York and the researcher's father is from Jamaica. The researcher explained that her parents have polar opposite views of education. The researcher recalled that her father (born in Jamaica) had very strong educational values. Her father was a "no nonsense" individual when it came to her education. On the other hand, her mother had a passive approach to education. Her mother only had an elementary education; however, she became a successful business woman: her own catering business and child care business. Her mother believed that success came from more than an education. Her mother stressed that using her "God given gifts" was her key to success. Her mother argued that there are many people in the world who have a degree or degrees, yet, they cannot find a decent job.



The researcher's father asserted that education was the key to his success. He received his high school diploma and went on to technical school, where he became a licensed mechanic. The researcher remembers her father's strict expectation. There was absolutely no missing school unless you were near death, and he stated that no teacher better ever call home or you would receive the ultimate punishment, more like a death sentence. The researcher further explained that mommy, on the other hand, was cool. She would let us stay home without father knowing, just because we needed a break. She would always say that these teachers are trying to kill people. What she really meant was the work was too difficult for her to help us. Ultimately, the researcher was the only one to attend and graduate from college in her family. She was also the first of her mother's sibling's children to attend college. The researcher has campaigned for the need for education, but often received backlash from her mother.

Because the Black race is so diverse e.g. Caribbean Black, Africans, Latino Blacks, Southern Blacks, African Americans, each of which embody their own cultural values, this researcher believes that all teachers, regardless of their race, need cultural sensitivity training to help them better understand the implications of culture and education. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that further investigation needs to be done to determine from what region these teachers originate to better understand their cultural values in order to better understand their apparent lack of sensitivity to the cultural needs of their Black students.

Seventy-two percent of teachers surveyed disagree or strongly disagree that schools with an ethnic population need a diverse faculty. Takei et al. (2008) found that inexperienced teachers who are unfamiliar with the community and culture they are serving often staff today's schools. Many researchers refer to this as a cultural mismatch, which needs to be addressed because the implications are serious (McNeal, 2005). Teachers who have experiences that are

vastly different from their students may lack the knowledge and understanding necessary to understand these differences. As a result, their expectations for behavior, achievement, and parent interactions may not be appropriate. Cultural sensitivity training supports educators and help them learn about the importance of adapting to the student population, instead of creating an environment where students and families feel uncomfortable or are forced to conform to the traditional way of schooling to succeed. Tharp and others asserted that many African American learners had difficulty with these traditional patterns of cognitive functioning because the customary school patterns ignored the impact culture had on their language, learning, and thinking (Franklin, 1992). Initial coursework, followed by ongoing professional development opportunities, are crucial to support teachers who lack cultural sensitivity.

One of the complex issues that educators face in urban schools is classroom management. When surveyed, seventy percent of participants said that White children are better behaved than Black children in their classroom. Unfortunately, academic growth will not take place without an effective behavior management plan, and most students attending the schools in this study are being taught in a classroom where behavior is problematic. Cultural mismatch and a lack of understanding of the population contribute to the difficulty teachers have managing behavior. Anyon (1980) reported that teachers in predominately low-income ethnic schools often make choices for students without considering the students' opinions or explaining the reasoning behind the decision. Students who are not given the opportunity to make choices for themselves often battle with teachers for control.

Teachers may also have different behavioral expectations for their students than the students experience at home and in the community. Gallavan & Ramirez (2005) argued that it is imperative for students who come to school and experience a cultural mismatch to have

educators with the knowledge to help students successfully navigate this dualistic environment. While it is equally important for teachers to help students with the conflicting expectations and experiences they may encounter in the classroom, teachers must also be equipped with classroom management techniques. This is an area where culturally sensitive, social justice training could help teachers acquire appropriate expectations for their student population. Pre-service coursework, or professional development, is necessary to help teachers create a classroom where cultural mismatch and behavior management do not result in low academic achievement.

Six-four percent of surveyed teachers believe that Black parents do not value their child's education. Teachers need to have background knowledge about socioeconomic status and cultural barriers to understand why participation and 'value' can be a challenge for many African American families (Takei & Shouse, 2008). Without this knowledge, teachers, especially at the inexperienced level, may not be aware of the vastly different worlds in which their students live. Instead, they assume that parents just don't care (Gallavan & Ramirez, 2005). This study found that seventy-two percent of survey participants believe that if society did not make so many excuses for Black children, the students would do better. Culturally sensitive educators understand that the problem with achievement is not Black students nor their parents, but rather that these students are being educated in the same system that deprived their parents of an equal opportunity to a quality education (Chapman, 2013). Therefore, parents and students alike may suffer from the same injustice, lack of a culturally sensitive teacher. Student achievement will increase when parents are purposefully included in their child's education. This can be done most effectively when teachers have a true understanding of the history and the community in which these families live and use those experiences to guide learning (McCarthy, 1999). Negative views of parents may ultimately affect home- school relationships and student

achievement.

Six-eight percent of teachers surveyed were willing to place blame for student achievement on parents, but seventy-six percent do not believe that their own lack of willingness to spend time learning about their students' community fosters assumptions and biases about students of color that can affect students' ability to learn. It is imperative that schools support educators to confront their own beliefs, assumptions, biases, and stereotypes that affect achievement and further widen the achievement gap. Milner (2005) found that properly prepared teachers participate in coursework where the "specific focus is on teachers' beliefs, cultural and racial mismatch, color-blindness, and teachers 'deficit thinking'" (768). Professional development that addresses these topics is critical in school buildings where many educators are unaware that their beliefs may be contributing to the underachievement of African American students.

While teacher preparation programs are responsible for preparing educators to teach in diverse settings, school districts must also provide continuous support and training opportunities for staff members (McNeal, 2005). Forty-nine percent of participants at the selected sites in this study do not believe that their schools' district provides sufficient opportunities to participate in sensitivity training on cultural differences. The survey results showed that teachers at these schools may have beliefs and attitudes that can negatively impact student achievement.

Another issue that emerged from the research study was differences in the attitudes' of elementary and middle school teachers. The findings suggest that teaching level had a significantly impact on teachers' attitudes and beliefs about culturally sensitive teaching for Black students. Teachers who taught at the elementary school level were more supportive of culturally relevant education. Fifty of the 54 elementary school teachers believe that culturally

relevant teaching is necessary for addressing the academic and social needs of Black students.

They also believe that diversity is important and that teacher education programs should provide preservice teachers with more opportunities that will prepare them to better serve culturally diverse student populations.

One elementary teacher reported that “it is important for teachers to understand the cultural background of the students that they teach”. A second stated that “it is imperative that you understand the culture so that you can educate African American students from a certain angle. If you have a better understanding of what our students go through, the chances are better that they will trust and confide in you. Once the students' guard is down, they are willing to try harder.” A third teacher proclaimed, “During my graduate studies, I took a class where we focused on the specific needs of students from disadvantaged neighborhoods. We looked at how issues which often seem simple to most were important aspects of education. A pre-service teacher or a teacher who taught in a thriving neighborhood may not understand how the absence of breakfast or a quiet place to study could have a profound impact on learning”.

On the other hand, middle school teachers focused more on factors that may be unrelated to culture and less on their ability or inability to meet the needs of Black students. One middle school teacher explained that “the communities that many of these students live in sometimes sets them up for failure”. A second middle teacher shared that “there is a lack of teaching self-love in a system that is operating on the basis of data and not nurturing the child as a whole”. A third stated that “I definitely feel like the system in place is set up so that it can be self-sustaining. Behaviors are tolerated in Black schools that would not be tolerated elsewhere. Part of the blame goes to the education system. The other part goes to the parents/families”. The researcher believes that middle school teachers would have an appreciation for and be supportive

of culturally relevant education if they better understood it. She asserts that all the issues that the middle school teachers shared could be addressed with culturally responsive teaching. This researcher firmly believes that middle school teachers need to understand the cultural background of their students in order to reach and meet their needs.

The study also found that most teachers believe that Black children do not feel accepted in school. This is problematic because students who do not feel accepted in school are more likely to perform poorly academically (Noguera, 2013). Noddings' (1988) ethic of care consists of the notion that there is one who is cared for and there is one who is caring. The caring one responds to the needs and wants of the cared for, while the cared for acknowledges the caring and reciprocates. Teachers who create environments where students are accepted create an environment conducive to learning. Teachers who understand the needs of their students extend care and believe that they have a duty to advocate on their students' behalf and charge themselves with the personal responsibility for making their students feel accepted in school (Owens & Ennis, 2005). This researcher argues that teachers need to create an environment that fosters learning through care and inclusiveness; however, to create such an environment, teachers must have a wealth of knowledge about their students. When students perceive that their teachers know and understand their needs, they become empowered and experience academic success after persistent failure (River-McCutchen, 2012). In essence, culturally responsive training will equip teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to help their students feel accepted and cared for in school.

Significant findings from this study include beliefs about parents' lack of involvement in their child's education, White students behaving better than Black students, Black students valuing rap over academics, curriculum and professional development that fail to reflect the

needs of the population, and lack of cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity training has the potential to prepare teachers to better meet the needs of students from historically marginalized groups.

The literature suggests that teachers' attitudes can positively change toward culturally sensitive teaching for African American students through coursework, field experience, interventions, and clinical practice (Brown, 2004; Capella-Santana, 2003; Keim et al, 2001; Locke, 2005; Milner et al, 2003). Ladson-Billing (1994) explained that teachers must be prepared through pre-service and in-service training to teach African American students. She argued that this only happens by first acknowledging that race and racism are problems in education. Secondly, she argued that there needs to be dialogue about issues of race and social injustice in education. She further explained that teachers must understand the role that race and ethnicity play when approaching teaching and interaction with Black children. She asserted that teachers must acquire knowledge of the culture and the community of the ethnic students that they teach, as unequipped educators dis-service ethnic students, African Americans in particular. Black children need culturally relevant education, but, more importantly, they need culturally responsive teachers to foster an environment that nurtures learning and embraces culture.

#### *Further Implications*

Black students, especially in elementary and middle school, need to develop a healthy self-esteem and racial identity. If they cannot identify with nor relate to the learning environment, they will have a difficult time learning, and, as a consequence, they may develop low esteem and an unhealthy racial identity. Joshua T. Dickerson (2016), author of *Cause I Ain't Got a Pencil*, discussed in his poem one major reason why teachers of African Americans need to be culturally sensitive to the needs of their Black students.

“I woke myself up  
Because we ain’t got an alarm clock  
Dug in the dirty clothes basket,  
Cause ain’t nobody washed my uniform  
Brushed my hair and teeth in the dark,  
Cause my mama wasn’t home.  
Got us both to school on time,  
To eat us a good breakfast.  
Then when I got to class the teacher fussed  
Cause I ain’t got a pencil”.

This researcher believes that if teachers better understood the issues Black children face most teachers would change their attitudes about them. Far too often teachers believe that Black children are not interested in school. They believe that they are only interested in sports and rap music. Perhaps, if teachers really understood the issues that Black students face, they would help to support them to develop a healthy identity and self-worth, as their identities and self-esteem are partly shaped by their teachers. Teachers need sensitivity training to better support students to develop a healthy racial identity, as well as foster healthy self-esteem.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This study analyzed data from a small sample. A study that includes a larger sample may be beneficial and produce a broader understanding of attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that teachers have about teaching and learning for Blacks students. Additionally, the findings from this research revealed that some demographic factors, such as, race, age, political party, educational attainment, years of experience, and training had an impact on the attitudes,



perceptions, and beliefs teachers hold about African American students. Further research needs to be conducted to determine to what extent those demographic factors play a role in shaping the attitudes and beliefs of elementary and middle school teachers of African American students.

Further research needs to be conducted to determine why and how teachers develop these attitudes and beliefs. Additional studies that focus on students' attitudes and their perceptions of their teachers may provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors that may contribute to the underachievement of African Americans. Getting a first hand account of students' feelings and beliefs about their teachers may provide a more in-depth understanding of teacher-student dynamics. Lastly, since this was an initial exploratory study, additional studies will need to be conducted to better understand the results of this study. Other studies should focus on gathering more qualitative data to gain a better understand of the attitudes and perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers.

### Final Conclusion

Researchers Bacon, Banks, Young and Jackson (2007) and this researcher consider teachers the most important factor in increasing student achievement. It is what happens in the classroom that determines whether a child succeeds or fails (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond, Hudson, & Kirby, 1989; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1995). Since teachers are an integral part of closing the achievement gap, we must help teachers reach a level of cultural sensitivity that is necessary to eliminate the achievement gap in schools. Teachers must also be willing to examine their own beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes by uncovering and discovering the racial biases they hold, as well as the racial barriers that may interfere with student academic performance.

### Researcher's Commentary

It is the researcher's belief that cultural sensitivity training is crucial as it requires educators to recognize that there is a gap in achievement, and it supports teachers to understand how their beliefs, attitudes, and practices may contribute to the achievement gap. Once teachers can accomplish that, they will be better able to evaluate their methods and make improvements based on the specific needs of the population they are serving.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A



**Long Island University  
College of Education,  
Information, & Technology  
Joy.gregg@my.LIU.edu**

Dear Participating Teachers:

I am conducting this study as a part of my doctoral dissertation research to better understand the attitudes teachers hold as they relate to teaching and learning for African American students in public elementary and middle school.

This anonymous survey should take less than 30 minutes to complete. In this survey, I ask you to share your beliefs about teaching and learning for African American students. Your participation is anonymous and any information you share will only be used strictly for the purpose of this dissertation. Perhaps most importantly, I invite you to offer, in your own words, any other views or insights about teaching and learning for African American students that you are willing to share with me.

If you volunteer for the study, you may withdraw at any time and stop participating. You will not be penalized in any way if you do not wish to remain as a participant. There are absolutely no risks from participating in this study. The results of this research will benefit the field of education for African American students and ethnic students at large.

In order to protect your identity and respect your privacy, every effort has been made for this survey to be anonymous and voluntary. I cannot and will not attempt to identify you or your school in this study, so I hope you will feel free to provide your frank and candid views. If you complete the attached survey, it means that you have read the information contained in this letter, and would like to be a volunteer in this research study. Furthermore, you are granting me permission to use your anonymous responses in my doctoral dissertation and other publications.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this survey which is supporting my dissertation research. If you have any questions, or would like to speak with me about this survey or the study in general, you may email me at Joy.gregg@my.liu.edu or email my dissertation advisor, Dr. Kramer-Vida, at Louisa.vida@LIU.edu. If you have questions concerning your rights as a subject you may contact the Executive Secretary of the Institutional Review Board, Ms. Patricia Harvey at (516) 299-3591.

Joy Gregg, M.S., A.B.D.  
Doctoral Candidate and Study Director  
Long Island University

## Appendix B



Long Island University  
College of Education, Information, & Technology  
[Joy.gregg@my.LIU.edu](mailto:Joy.gregg@my.LIU.edu)

Dear Principal:

My name is Joy Gregg, and I am an Education Leadership doctoral student at Long Island University Post. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Kramer-Vida of the Long Island University's College of Education, Information, and Technology. Long Island University's Institutional Review Board has given me approval to approach schools for my research. A copy of their approval is attached to this letter. I invite you to consider taking part in this research.

**Aims of the Research**

- The purpose of this study is to understand how teachers' attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and readiness impact the achievement of African American students. In an attempt to understand this in an urban area, a research project will be conducted using a survey instrument that will investigate teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive, constructivist teaching, grounded in social-justice principles, for teaching African Americans.
- This research will focus on attitudes toward culturally relevant pedagogy to increase cultural sensitivity in teachers and to potentially close the racial achievement gap.

**Significance of the Research Project**

The research is significant in three ways:

1. It will highlight attitudes and beliefs that teachers hold that may contribute to the underachievement of Black students in public school.
2. It will provide information on how teachers' views of instruction, culture, and home community relate to increasing achievement for African-American students.



3. It will provide educators with a greater understanding of culturally relevant teaching for ethnic students.

### **Benefits of the Research to Schools**

1. This study can inform teacher preparation programs as they prepare to equip teachers entering urban classrooms.
2. The findings of this study can contribute to Ladson-Billings' findings on culturally relevant pedagogy.

### **Research Plan and Method**

First, the researcher will create a survey where teacher participants will be offered two options of completing the survey. Option #1 is an online survey via survey monkey and option #2 is a paper version. Participants who chose the paper survey will be asked to return the questionnaire in an envelope. The researcher will collect the completed surveys as teachers complete them.

Participants will be asked to volunteer to participate in the study. A consent form will be given to all participants. The consent form will include the purpose of the study, what participants will be asked to do, risks, and benefits. The form will guarantee anonymity and confidentiality.

Participants will remain anonymous.

### **School Involvement**

Once I have received your consent to approach teachers to participate in the study, I will

- distribute informed consent forms to participants,
- arrange a time with your school for data collection to take place.

Attached for your information are copies of the Participant Information Statement and the Consent Form. Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Sincerely,

Joy Gregg, M.S., A.B.D.  
Doctoral Candidate and Study Director  
Long Island University

## Appendix C



**Long Island University**  
**College of Education, Information, & Technology**  
[Joy.gregg@my.LIU.edu](mailto:Joy.gregg@my.LIU.edu)

Dear Community Superintendent:

I am currently a doctoral student at Long Island University, CW Post. I am planning to conduct research on the attitudes of teachers toward culturally sensitive teaching and learning for African Americans. As you are well aware, the underachievement of African American students is a major problem in our state, and nation wide. There has been much discussion regarding appropriate programming for these students. Additionally, with the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, there has been a strong movement initiated to increase the achievement of all ethnic students, especially closing the achievement gap between Black and White students. As I currently work as a New York City public school teacher with African American students, I would like to investigate teachers' attitudes toward culturally sensitive teaching for African American students.

My research study will entail teacher participation and I am requesting district approval to survey teachers within your school district. Participation of teachers will be on a voluntary basis. Participants will complete a Likert style survey to investigate their attitude and belief about culturally sensitive teaching and learning for African American students. With the hope of revealing factors that contribute to increasing the achievement of African American students and ethnic students at large. All information will be kept confidential and participation is voluntary. There will be no consequences should individuals choose not to participate in the research study. Additionally, this research will not take away from the current job responsibilities and duties of the classroom teachers.

There are proposed benefits to the district as a result of this research study. One proposed benefit will be to uncover the attitudes teachers have towards cultural sensitive teaching and learning for African American students that may contribute to the achievement and/or underachievement of African American students. Additionally, teacher characteristics will be explored to determine if demographic (age, years of teaching, race, ethnicity, training, etc.) factors affect teachers' attitude. This information will directly benefit the district because training on culturally relevant teaching can be applied to this population to increase achievement and overall self-esteem.

The anticipated start date for research collection is March 27, 2017. The regular educators within the district will be supplied with either a paper copy or an online link to the survey. Participant who choose a paper copy will be provided with a return envelope to be collected by me at the selected schools.

I understand that the school district's permission to allow me to conduct research within the district does not necessarily mean endorsement of the research data. Should you request it, I agree to send a copy of the research results to your attention at the conclusion of the research study.

Sincerely,

Joy Gregg, M.S., A.B.D.  
Doctoral Candidate and Study Director  
Long Island University

## Appendix D

**TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHING FOR  
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS  
TEACHER SURVEY****Section A**

Instructions: Please answer the following questions. Your answer will assist in the categorization of the responses.

1. Please indicate your gender. (please check one)  
☐ Male  
☐ Female
2. What is your age range? (please check one)  
☐ 21-30  
☐ 31-40  
☐ 41-50  
☐ 51-60  
☐ 61+
3. Highest level of education achieved? (please check one)  
☐ Bachelors  
☐ 1<sup>st</sup> Masters  
☐ 2<sup>nd</sup> Masters or Plus 30  
☐ Advanced Degree/ Professional Diploma  
☐ Doctoral Degree
4. Current level of teaching assignment? (please check one)  
☐ Elementary  
☐ Middle school
5. Number of years teaching at this level: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Total number of years teaching: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Ethnicity: (please check one)  
☐ Hispanic or Latino  
☐ Not Hispanic or Latino
8. Race: (please check one)  
☐ Indian/Native American  
☐ Asian  
☐ Black or African Descendant  
☐ Caucasian
9. Do you consider yourself social conservative?  
☐ Yes

☐ No

10. Which category best represents your political ideology? (please check one)

☐ Liberal/Progressive

☐ Moderate

☐ Conservative

11. Were you raised in a diverse community (racially & socioeconomically)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. What kind of school did you attend as a child?

☐ Public school

☐ Private school

☐ Parochial School

☐ Other

13. Did you attend schools that were diverse (racially & socioeconomically)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

14. How many years of experience do you have working with African American students?  
(please check one)

☐ 1-5

☐ 6-15

☐ 16+

15. Have you received training to teach ethnic students? (please check one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

16. Have you received sensitivity training for culturally diverse students? (please check one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

17. If yes, please describe the type of training

☐ Pre-service training

☐ Professional development

☐ College coursework

☐ Self study

Comments: Please write any additional comments you may have concerning teaching African American or ethnic students.

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***CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE →***

TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHING FOR  
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS  
TEACHER SURVEY

**Section B**

Instructions: Please read each statement and check the box that best describes your belief. Please check only one (1) box for each statement. Your information will be kept strictly confidential.

1. Teacher preparation programs should focus on culturally relevant teaching.

☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

2. I consider my students' culture when planning lessons.

☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

3. When preparing my classroom, I think about my students and how I can create an environment that fosters learning for all students.

☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

4. I use materials that represent various perspectives.

☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

5. I spent time learning about my students' community.

☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

6. The school district I work in has had sufficient opportunities to participate in sensitivity training on cultural differences.

☐ Strongly Agree

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. I am equipped to teach students from diverse backgrounds

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. College courses failed to prepare me to teach African American students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. I prepare assessments that mirror my students' learning styles.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. I plan activities that empower African American students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. I plan lessons that celebrate African American students in a positive way.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. Test biases are responsible for the racial achievement gap.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. Ethnicity and culture are only celebrated at my school during major holidays.



- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Closing the achievement gap is very important.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. I am aware of biases and stereotypes I have about students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. Race and ethnicity have little or nothing do with student achievement.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. White children are better behaved than African American children.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

18. Racism is a major problem in education.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

19. Suspension and retention are major issues for African American students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

20. Students should be taught about racial injustices.

- ☐ Strongly Agree

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

21. High quality education is an issue in most African American communities.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

22. Racism in any manner lowers a child's self-esteem.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

23. Attitudes and prejudices about groups of students impact the way I view and teach them.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

24. Most African American student are self-motivated to learn.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

25. I feel that most African American students do not value their education.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

26. I often have to discipline African American students more than any other group of students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

27. Most African American boys are hostile and aggressive.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

28. Society often makes excuses for African American students' failures.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

29. Most African American parents value their child's education.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

30. Most African American students do not feel accepted at school.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

31. I look for opportunities to learn about my students' culture.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

32. African American students are more focused than White students.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

33. I understand the issues that African American students face.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

34. African American children are more interested in rap music than academics.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

35. When I'm teaching I don't see my students' race, I just teach.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

36. The curriculum I use represents diverse perspectives.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

37. African American students are likely to be labeled "gifted".

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

38. A curriculum should focus on skills students need to know and not students' culture.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

39. Teachers are required to make accommodations for students from diverse backgrounds.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

40. I often feel overwhelmed and unequipped to implement a culturally relevant curriculum.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

41. Teaching an African-centered curriculum excludes other groups of students.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

42. I believe teaching social justice principles increases achievement for African American students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

43. African American students should be taught using African principles.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

44. I believe that African American students are inferior to White students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

45. Schools with an ethnic population need a diverse faculty.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

46. I have entertained thoughts of "implied racism" that I am aware of when working with African American students.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

47. If African American students are not learning, I attribute that to their lack of motivation to learn.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

48. My experiences with trying to get African American parents involved in their children's educational experience has been unsuccessful.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

49. I frequently incorporate character building and other programs to motivate African American students to stay in school and to learn.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

50. I have had (past or present) negative experiences with African American students that affected how I have treated them.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

***THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!***